ZEAL: A SHORT STORY

—J. F. Powers

THE

Commonweal

THE CATHOLIC PRESS

Mission of the Press

by Federico Alessandrini

Journals of Opinion

by Robert C. Hartnett

A Columnist's Lot

by Donald McDonald

Volume LXIII, No. 19 February 10, 1956 Twenty Cents

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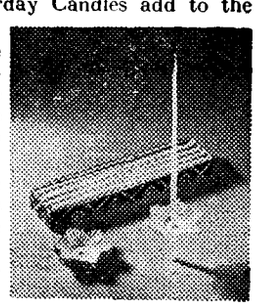

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The Commonweal

week by week

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

THIS IS a season for prestige advertising in the metropolitan newspapers. Various mass media are taking occasion to demonstrate ways in which to claim superiority over their competitors. For newspapers and mass-circulation magazines the display "copy" touches such bases as comparative increases in newsstand sales, overall circulation and national or regional influence. One step further is to highlight the average wealth and influence per reader. Finally, to clinch the matter, comes the big-type announcement of growth or total of paid advertising—the lineage which is the real object of an imposing complex of editorial and promotional activities. Obviously lineage makes the publishers' world go round.

Our own humble lineage constitutes one of the more evident differences between The Commonweal and its contemporaries of the mass media publishing world. Advertising does supply a tangible and useful part of this magazine's required revenue, but it is a comparatively minor part. It is not the tail that wags the dog. Consequently certain elements familiar to patrons of the larger publishing enterprises are missing here: sensational subscription offers designed to maintain or raise circulation levels and, therefore, advertising rates, clever and repeated blandishments of a colorful and costly sort to persuade current readers to renew their subscriptions, tremendous commissions to magazine agencies for securing and holding subscribers, all with advertising revenue as the object, for it is sizable enough to provide the sinews.

At the same time, The Commonweal is greatly affected by the hazards now confronting all those engaged in producing and distributing American periodicals. With an operation of our limited scope the effect of changes is often even more pronounced than for others. This is notably so in such a matter as an increase in the postal rates despite our conviction that this journal exemplifies the type of periodical for which lower rates were originally intended—one which by its dissemination of information and considered opinion seeks primarily to contribute to the development of a more enlightened citizenry.

When a big distributor such as the American News Company decides, for reasons of business efficiency, materially to cut down its list of smaller accounts, The Commonweal, deprived of newsstand distribution in a number of American cities, loses a very important means of normal growth. When the paper mills decide on a policy of scarcity and considerably higher prices, this magazine is actually more seriously affected than the major publishing empires. We are sensitive to all the changing winds of publishing fortune, often considerably more sensitive than the generality of our peers.

TO publish a journal of opinion for its own sake under present conditions, and with limited means, consequently involves extremely serious handicaps. But The Commonweal also enjoys a number of advantages. Advertisers do not call the tune or, as in the case of the best established and most reputable mass media—which are not dependent on any single advertiser or group of advertisers—even exert an implicit or silent pressure. Moreover, The Commonweal is politically non-partisan and therefore free to praise or criticize, as events warrant, Democrats and Republicans, proposed or neglected legislation, prominent figures of every stripe. We are in a position to call things as we see them.

The Commonweal would not be able to operate under such material handicaps, however, were it not for the sustained interest and support of its readers. Without them it would not be able to press unceasingly for certain unpopular objectives which we believe are demanded of America by a Christian social conscience—to undo the grave evils of the migratory labor system, for example, or to raise living standards in the destitute areas of the world, or to amend immigration laws and procedures so that this well-endowed nation will

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have its due share in the resettlement of the dispossessed.

Because it is not a commercial enterprise, The Commonweal tends to enjoy an especially close relationship with many of its readers. It tends to be a spokesman for those with a special, considered approach to important political and cultural issues. Because it is a non-commercial enterprise exposed more than most to severe occupational hazards, what counts is the intensity of the interest of The Commonweal's individual readers. On that depends the continuance and growth of this journal of opinion as it nears the halfway mark of its thirty-second year.

NAMING NAMES

SHOULD a witness before a Congressional Committee be forced to name names? Even though he is willing to talk freely about his own conduct, is he guilty of contempt of Congress if he refuses to cite those with whom he once associated in Communist or Communist-backed enterprises? Congressional investigators have long answered both questions with emphatic affirmatives. But, by reversing the conviction of a witness who refused to name names before the House Un-American Activities Committee, the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington recently ruled otherwise.

The Court's decision was hardly out when the fireworks started. Senator William E. Jenner of Indiana and several members of the House Un American Activities Committee denounced the ruling in no uncertain terms. Senator McCarthy described the court's decision as "asinine" and, with his usual fine feeling for the separation of powers, said that the judges should be haled before a Congressional Committee to explain their conduct. And all this furor was not without reason, for if the decision is not overturned, it will play hob with present procedures in the Congressional Committees. But it seems reasonable enough to point out that the Congressional Committees have brought most of this on themselves.

When a witness is willing to talk about himself but is reluctant to drag his friends into the mess with him, Congressional investigators love to hint darkly that he is concealing espionage. Rarely, however, does this seem to be the case. Often enough, the witness is testifying about events which took place ten, fifteen or twenty years ago. He may feel certain in his own mind that the persons he then associated with engaged in no activities that were illegal and that they have long since broken with the Communist Party, and he is as a result unwilling to expose them to publicity.

Those on the outside often say casually that determining culpability or lack of it in such situations should be left to responsible authorities, rather than decided by the individual witnesses. But the fact is that the question is not so simple. In the present climate of opinion, merely naming people before a Congressional Committee, even in connection with political opinions held ten or twenty years ago, often automatically entails loss of personal reputation and livelihood for those named, even though there may not be the remotest connection between their jobs and national security. If all this served any useful national purpose, it might still be said that this is the price people have to pay for their youthful political indiscretions, even though these actually involved nothing illegal. But is any useful national purpose in fact served? Personal political aggrandizement and a satisfying swatch of newspaper clippings may be obtained, but what else is normally accomplished?

It was around this point that the majority opinion of the Court of Appeals centered, with the Court ruling that the witness could be required to answer only questions which served some legislative purpose. In asking for names in this instance, that purpose was not shown by the government, the Court decided. "It is very questionable," the judges said, "whether exposure of individuals to public contempt is a valid legislative purpose." We heartily concur, and here, we think, is the heart of the matter.

NEXT WEEK

DAVID H. GREENE, recently returned from an extended visit, writes of the current importance of the language question in Ireland.

"Gaelic is the key to what is called the 'national memory.' With this key the Gael can free himself from a culture which, despite its virtues, is not his own culture and which has either stifled his own genius or at the least prevented it from developing in a more natural way. The proof of this, it is argued, is the glorious Literary Revival which began in the '90's, when Irish writers rejected English models and, inspired by the rediscovery of a native mythology and literature, went back to a well of Irish undefiled. It is not always emphasized, however, that Yeats and his contemporaries knew little Gaelic and the draughts they took from the well were in the English translations of the Celtic scholars and the popularizations of Standish James O'Grady."

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In the months ahead, it is quite possible that the Supreme Court will end by reversing this two-to-one decision of the Court of Appeals. But no matter what the ruling of the high Court may be, the present decision should at least serve as an overdue warning to Congressional investigators. If witnesses are to be judged in contempt for refusing to name names to members of Congress, those public officials must themselves behave in responsible fashion. The Court of Appeals has made it clear once again that the power of Congressional Committees is not absolute and that what is involved here is no one-way street. If witnesses have a responsibility to testify, those who elicit the testimony have the responsibility of seeing that it is not distorted, torn out of historical context, and exploited for passing political or personal advantage. Regardless of legal decisions, when the day arrives that a witness can tell what he knows and be assured that his testimony will be treated honestly and soberly—not simply used to make headlines—there will be far fewer witnesses who will be reluctant to name names.

THE WESTINGHOUSE STRIKE

THE LONG-DRAWN-OUT Westinghouse strike is a tragedy for all concerned. Because of its duration, its violence on the picket-lines, and its drastic effect on the economies of whole regions, this strike surely deserves Secretary of Labor Mitchell's description as the year's outstanding failure in collective bargaining.

Although it has not been much emphasized in the newspapers, the issue of impending automation at Westinghouse is important and explains much about the hard feelings among the strikers and the reluctance of management to agree to binding arbitration. Unwillingness by the company to commit itself about rumored mass lay-offs in the near future and employee worries about how the change-over is to be effected have apparently played a large part in keeping the strike going. If this is considered as one of the first major tests of what introducing automation to a long-established industry will mean, the Westinghouse strike is certainly not a very happy portent for the future.

RACE FOR SURVIVAL

ATOMIC ENERGY Commissioner Thomas E. Murray called last November for the creation of a "climate of urgency" in which disarmament talks should be held and the necessary education of the world's peoples for the acceptance of effective disarmament should go forward. There has been little evidence to date that this climate of urgency has been created.

President Eisenhower, for example, recently stated that the road to disarmament would be "slow and tortuous." It might also be observed that both East and West are treading that road with laggard steps. The Disarmament Commission of the UN has adjourned without setting a definite date for resumption of its discussions. Mr. Harold Stassen, the President's adviser on disarmament matters, is said to be contemplating a trip through the Far East this spring. It is reported that he will follow the itinerary of Messrs. Khrushchev and Bulganin, and will "campaign for peace and disarmament." It is rather hard to see how Mr. Stassen's junket will be more than an effort to mend the fences in Asia which the Russian leaders knocked down. At best, it represents a leisurely approach to the urgent question of disarmament.

But while the planners of peace seem committed to drift and delay, the planners of pushbutton wars have stepped up their schedules of nuclear arms development. Russia is reported to have bombers, with a range of 5,000 miles, capable of delivering hydrogen bombs. East and West alike have quickened the tempo of missile development; the goal of each is a 5,000 mile missile with thermonuclear warhead, capable of crossing the Atlantic in twenty minutes and destroying its city-target. Most experts agree that President Eisenhower's "open-sky" proposal would be inadequate to detect a stockpile of such intercontinental missiles, which could be hidden underground with the necessary launching equipment until a button was pushed to start a thermonuclear war.

This fact makes hollow and unrealistic the recent declaration of Mr. Lodge, our chief delegate to the UN, that no nation which "truly hates war" could fail to go along with the President's aerial inspection plan, while acceptance of the plan would, at one stroke, free the world from the fear of a "final war." The inadequacy of this measure to detect a cache of intercontinental missiles gauges the anachronistic thinking of the Western delegates to the UN Disarmament Commission who urged the open-sky plan as a "confidence-building" measure to be adopted until an adequate means of controlled disarmament can be found.

The facts of life and death in the atomic age would suggest that 1) disarmament plans must include freezing the development of intercontinental missiles; 2) setting up unrestricted ground inspection to check each power's compliance with this arresting of missile development; 3) the open

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recognition that these initial phases of comprehensive disarmament will probably rest, not on mutual confidence, but on mutual distrust. In the ideal order, nations living in the shadow of atomic annihilation should, perhaps, place their hope for survival in mutual confidence; in the real order such confidence is more likely to follow, rather than precede, effective disarmament. Initially, at least, East and West are more likely to place their confidence, not in each other, but in an effective inspection system born of the distrust between them.

Unless the U.S. is prepared to lead this kind of break-through in disarmament planning, "the war which nobody wants" may well move toward the world on a telescoped timetable.

BISHOPS IN PRISON

ON MOST things, the Soviet Union blows sometimes hot, sometimes cold. But its policy in dealing with the Church remains consistently bad, a fact emphasized again in a recent dispatch by Barrett McGurn of the N. Y. *Herald Tribune*. To prove his point, Mr. McGurn cited the new edition of the Pontifical Annuary, a sixteen-hundred-page Church directory now in its 241st year. Listed there are one hundred and fifty Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops now in Communist prisons or otherwise cut off from their dioceses as a result of Communist interference—a figure impressive enough in itself and a total which includes one out of every twenty Catholic bishops in the world. In recent months, some visitors to Russia have talked much about a change in the Soviet political climate, and certainly such a change is both possible and devoutly to be desired. But if such a change is proclaimed, one of the ways to judge its extent is to wait and see what happens to the bishops and priests now in captivity.

H. L. MENCKEN

TWENTY-EIGHT years ago this month, Michael Williams, who was then editor of The Commonweal, wrote an article entitled "Prayer for a Man Writing a Book." The man was H. L. Mencken, who died last month in his Baltimore home.

Mr. Mencken was, at that time, at the zenith of his explosive career. He had gained fame and notoriety as newspaperman, editor, author, and above all, as critic. He had, quite early, published works on G. B. Shaw, Nietzsche, and Ibsen. He had been co-editor of the *Smart Set* and, later, of the *American Mercury*, magazines whose issues were eagerly awaited by the young iconoclastic intellectuals who rallied under the banner of Mencken. For Mr. Mencken wrote as a warrior on the American scene. He invaded the middle-class mind and with the formidable weapon of his vigorous, violent and energetic prose, he stormed the redoubts and overthrew the idols.

Feeling that the times were stagnant and acting on the principle that nothing exceeds like excess, he launched savage attacks on prohibition, Bible-belt bigotry, various shams and shibboleths. "The plain fact is," he wrote, "that I am not a fair man and don't want to hear both sides. On all subjects, from aviation to xylophone playing, I have fixed and invariable ideas."

The great influence he exerted between 1910 and the middle thirties was necessarily ephemeral. Much of his writing has reduced itself to historical interest, not only because some of his "fixed and invariable" ideas allowed him to tilt at windmills but because his attacks were often so successful that the idols he overthrew have long been gathering dust.

One aspect of his work disturbs many readers who would otherwise be fervent admirers. For he frequently wrote as if religion were one among the idols he attacked. Although he could write in the twenties that "it may be . . . by thus moving away from religion, man is losing something," he recovered himself and continued to write as if religion was a superstition, a stumbling block in the way of intelligent people and a better civilization. To some it must have seemed ironic that the book for which Michael Williams offered a prayer turned out to be *Treatise on the Gods*, a book in which Mr. Mencken attempted to prove how vain religion is. If so, it is irony compounded to realize that in this naive and uninformed book Mr. Mencken revealed true religious virtues.

In offering his prayer for H. L. Mencken's book Michael Williams wrote: "Yes, we Catholics, my dear Mencken, more than a little agree with you . . . and all of us who read you with any judgment and discrimination admire in you a devotion to many very noble things: freedom, truth, honesty, honor, courage, faith and beauty. . . . Writers who point out and denounce the evils of their times, even when they themselves suggest no remedies, cannot but help the unending work of the Church. Writers who fight for noble things always fight on the side of the angels. I think, my dear Mencken, that you are such a writer."

Twenty-eight years later, we concur in these sentiments. But we offer our prayer not for a book, but for a good critic and a great journalist, for the man himself, H. L. Mencken.

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Mission of the Press

"THE CATHOLIC PRESS IS OFTEN UNPOPULAR, NOT FOR WHAT IT WRITES, BUT FOR ITS PROFESSION OF FAITH"

FEDERICO ALESSANDRINI

THE MISSION of the Catholic press is to serve the truth, which is justice, in charity, which is love.

In *True Humanism,* Jacques Maritain speaks of the problem of the Catholic press and of the serious difficulties which it presents. By calling itself Catholic, he writes, a periodical places itself on a spiritual plane, but since it is a periodical it must not lose contact with everyday events. As a result there arise two dangers: either the temporal is confused with the spiritual, or the temporal is avoided and, in that case, one loses any possibility of influencing the world, to which one is, nevertheless, addressing himself. In order to avoid this ambiguity, M. Maritain proposes two types of periodicals: the first to be specifically and declaredly Catholic; the second to be political or "cultural," Catholic by inspiration only.

Professional experience shows, however, that it is difficult to apply these criteria, even though they may be acceptable in theory. Moreover, M. Maritain's suggestions were made in 1935; it is probable that twenty years later the French thinker himself would no longer state them in the same terms, precisely because, in modern life, the temporal continually tends to increase its scope. Perhaps this phenomenon has not yet made itself felt so strongly in relatively young countries like the United States, but on this old European continent, so burdened by history, traditions, and prejudices which have become myths, the temporal continually threatens to leave its own sphere in order to extend its field of competence.

This "extension of the temporal" results from the very complexity of modern life, which assigns to the civil power, for example, powers which, yesterday, did not belong to it. This means that the realm of the "theandric," to use M. Maritain's expression, becomes larger and larger, or, in canonical language, that the area of "mixed matters" is becoming increasingly vast in our time.

It seems to me historically undeniable that contemporary confusions do not arise because the spiritual goes beyond the field which is its own, but because the temporal comes to meet the spiritual and strives to push it back into an increasingly restricted zone. In the minds of the open or hidden enemies of the spiritual, the ideal would be realized if the spiritual would content itself with a discreet celebration of religious rites and not say anything about "other matters," that is to say, about life. Or else they would remember the spiritual only when its alliance in a struggle for material interests would seem to constitute an advantage. As a result of this constant encounter between the temporal and the spiritual, the Catholic press, even when primarily concerned with the spiritual, is dragged into the temporal field in spite of itself; for this reason M. Maritain's advice, which was perhaps valid in 1935, seems less so today.

I believe, therefore, that in carrying out its mission the Catholic press should not worry too much about external and extraneous reactions. It is often unpopular, not for what it writes, but for its profession of faith; in a choice between the orthodox and the heretic those who are hostile to the Church will always prefer the heretic.

The first conclusion to be drawn from these somewhat theoretical considerations deals with the main problem of the Catholic press: the training of those who write and publish it. If their first task is to transmit to others the things which they have contemplated (the *contemplata tradere* of St. Thomas) they must first know how to see and think deeply. Catholic journalists and writers, to be truly worthy of the name, must be religiously, culturally and technically prepared. What

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holds true in all other areas of human activity holds true in this one as well: we are the subjects and not the objects of history; the world does not progress automatically, but by the contribution which each one of us makes to the community through both his faith and his works. It is the particular duty of the Catholic journalist to help make the Catholic contribution to the community, and thus, through the Catholic press, to be both chroniclers and historians of this Catholic contribution.

PIUS XI, in naming St. Francis de Sales the patron of Catholic journalists, spoke clearly of this double role of the Catholic Press. ". . . Above all," he said, "may journalists study with utmost diligence and may they attain, as much as they can, a possession of Catholic doctrine; may they beware of lacking in truth, nor may they, under the pretext of avoiding offence to enemies, attenuate or dissimulate it; may they take care of their style of speaking, and may they strive to express thoughts with perspicuity and beauty of words, so that readers may delight in the truth; that, if it be necessary to fight adversaries, they may indeed know how to confute the errors and resist the improbity of the perverse, but in such a way as to make it known that they are animated by rectitude and, above all, moved by charity . . ."

In other words, the task of the Catholic press is a task of Christian mediation, which implies a large body of knowledge which cannot always be easily unraveled and divided: the knowledge of God and a spiritual life rooted in God; the knowledge of the doctrine of the Church in all its aspects; the knowledge of history, which goes on with us in its manifold aspects. And to these different but parallel degrees of knowledge must be added the ability to express oneself clearly and convincingly. If the requisite knowledge is present and journalistic ability is lacking, the Catholic press will be staffed by good Christians, but bad journalists. Inversely, if knowledge is lacking and ability is not, the Catholic press will have only good journalists. In either case, therefore, it will fail in its mission.

A particular quality must mark the Catholic press if it is to be fruitful, and that quality is humility or, at least, "non-pride." The temptation which can strike those who have had a certain amount of success is that of considering themselves, at a certain point, participants in a kind of infallibility. It is then that they ascend into the pulpit; it is then that the danger foreseen and denounced by Jacques Maritain becomes very evident, that of substituting for the legitimate and ordinary teachings of the Church a sort of teaching of one's own, extemporaneous and, in any case, arbitrary. At that point, the journalist's mission is unconsciously diminished, and yields to the manifestations of a personalism which considers itself unerring and which, finally, can alter the perspectives of truth and charity. And this, of course, distorts the mission of the Catholic Press.

"A DEFINITE, COHERENT OUTLOOK"

Journals of Opinion

ROBERT C. HARTNETT

GENERAL discussions about the purposes and workings of the American Catholic press, such as are annually occasioned by Catholic Press Month each February, frequently hit one big bump at the start. This is the circumstance that different sections of the Catholic press have quite different purposes and must adopt quite different means to achieve them.

The great body of weekly diocesan newspapers, for example (as the very term *news*paper suggests), engages primarily in the reporting of news. The great body of Catholic magazines, on the other hand, engages primarily in a wide variety of non-news-reporting journalistic activities, ranging all the way from doctrinal discussions to fiction.

The journalistic norms applicable to the reporting of news are quite different from those applicable to the general and specialized magazine field. Similarly, the norms applicable to one type of magazine differ widely from those applicable to other types. Of course, publications of widely different types often have departments in common, such as the editorials found in both diocesan weeklies and in many different kinds of magazines.

This article deals with one particular kind of American Catholic magazine, the journals of opinion.

Father Robert C. Hartnett, S. J., who recently completed seven years as editor-in-chief of *America*, is now at the University of Detroit.

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America and The Commonweal belong to what we might call the "pure type" of journal of opinion. Other publications, including diocesan weeklies, participate in journal-of-opinion journalism in varying degrees. What is said here about journals of opinion therefore has application to periodicals of other types to whatever extent each engages, in a subsidiary way, in journal-of-opinion journalism. If a general surgeon occasionally does orthopedic surgery, he then has to meet the standards of that branch of his profession.

Precisely what is a "journal of opinion"? It is a magazine, usually published weekly, which has a definite, coherent outlook in terms of which its editors and contributors analyze and reach judgments about current events and trends, especially in the social, economic, political, literary and (in some cases) religious fields. It addresses itself to a general readership, to those, namely, who, regardless of occupation or station in life, are interested in analyses terminating in judgments, based on a coherent outlook, about current events and trends in the fields mentioned.

One can easily distinguish a journal of opinion by what it does not publish. A journal of opinion seldom publishes an historical article, for example. It may occasionally pull things together on a given subject covering a period of the past five or ten years, to take note of the progress being made, let us say, in race-relations, or to unfold the full sweep of a problem. Harold C. Hinton did this in his article on "America's Role in Asia" in The Commonweal for December 30. Vincent S. Kearney did the same in his article on "The Middle East Is Not for Politics" in *America* for December 24. Some historical flashbacks are occasionally called for in order to put current issues in proper perspective. But journals of opinion usually avoid going very far back.

The reason is that their accent is on immediacy. They look forward, not backward, because their purpose is to help shape opinion on what next needs to be done. They have to use their limited space to point out the immediate, not the remote, causes of present situations. Their readers have other means, in the form of other magazines and books, from which to learn the more remote historical settings of today's problems. Moreover, if the journal of opinion is at all old, it dealt with those more remote factors when they first arose. Doing so again would be repetitious.

Similarly, journals of opinion eschew biographical articles. Perhaps the chief reason is that such journals are more concerned with policies than with personalities. Here again, other types of magazines and newspapers furnish readers with biographical sketches. Since the readership, and hence the number of pages per issue, of journals of opinion are customarily small, they must perforce use their meager space only for articles pertaining to their primary purpose. Otherwise they would fail of that purpose.

IN view of what might be called the "unpopularity" of journals of opinion, it is not surprising that there are so few of them and that, unless they are subsidized, they usually lead precarious, marginal financial lives. The *Nation* and the *New Republic,* the oldest American secular journals of opinion, have greatly declined (the former very far leftwards) from their liberal heyday. One seldom sees the *Progressive,* an old LaFollette organ, quoted today. The more recent *New Leader* struggles on, waging a vigorous anti-Communist type of journalism in the name of a vague sort of "social democracy." The *Reporter,* a liberal review established in 1949, is a fortnightly. The rightwing *Freeman,* another postwar experiment, could not survive even under a wealthy publisher and became a monthly house organ of the Foundation for Economic Education of Irvington, N.Y. With the January, 1956 issue it has adopted a cheaper, smaller format. The *National Review* is now trying to fill the void in journals of conservative opinion.

In the religious field, the liberal Protestant *Christian Century,* which seems to have "Rome" on the brain, is about the only counterpart to *America* and The Commonweal. Its scope, however, is more restricted to the purely religio-social field.

In England, the Catholic lay-edited London *Tablet,* the *Economist* and the *New Statesman and Nation* are examples of the weekly journal of opinion. Although the two former have formats which make our American journals of opinion look almost flamboyant by comparison, they have considerable influence. The *Economist* advertises the frequency with which it is quoted throughout the English-speaking world.

A former teacher of mine used to say that Catholics tend to make the mistake of regarding all propositions, including those dealing with public issues, as dogmas, whereas Protestants tend to make the mistake of regarding all propositions, including those dealing with philosophy and theology, as mere opinion. A good deal can be said in support of this observation.

Actually, the scope of intellectual certitudes, whether philosophical or religious or embodying general truths in other fields, though broad enough, is relatively limited. The scope of human opinion, on the other hand, is well-nigh limitless. Catholic journals of opinion, of course, either assume or invoke such certitudes as occasion offers. But this is not what characterizes them.

What characterizes them are the judgments they reach in the contingent order, the order of social,

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economic, political and cultural change. Operating from the major premises of what St. Thomas calls the "syllogism of practical reason," they expend most of their efforts on the minor premises. From an objective point of view, these minor premises seldom admit of certitude. Whether the national and international common good will be promoted by more or less foreign economic aid, for example, is a matter of probabilities. The same is true of the Bricker Amendment, the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, the Internal Security (McCarran) Act of 1950 and hosts of other public policies.

This does not mean, however, that all opinions on these questions are of equal validity. The "preponderance of probabilities" can be such as to render one policy a dictate of prudence and a contrary policy an unjustifiable gamble. On the other hand, relatively few persons guided entirely by objective analyses and judgments will entirely agree about the precise evaluation they would give to the various aspects of any given policy. You get about every possible configuration of opinion on every important public question. The reasons for this kaleidoscope of opinion are very complex. People's information varies from person to person. Their presuppositions vary. Their mental acumen varies. The experiences which color every individual's judgments vary. Their temperaments vary. Their personal interests, their hopes and fears, vary. No wonder the importance they attach to this or that aspect of any policy-question reflects these individual differences.

Public issues are so complicated that nobody's grasp of any big issue is really perfect. Nor need it be. All we have to decide is in what direction the better course probably lies. This we can do, because the issues soon become defined in terms of definite proposals presented to us for a yes-or-no answer. We are not expected to decide the details. And we certainly do not have to deny, once we make up our minds, that something, perhaps even a great deal, can be said for the other side. But when some action is imperative, we have to reach a decision of some sort, at least on the broad question of policy.

Public issues are usually so involved that no journal of opinion can do more than indicate in a fragmentary way the chief reasons why it takes the position it does. The mere fact that its editors do not in writing explicitly advert to all the opposing arguments or even to all the supporting arguments is no proof that they are unaware of them. What it does mean is that they have made as complete a canvass of the question as their resources of time, available information and energy allowed, and have decided that the most important things to be said on the subject in a column or a page or two are thus and so.

The conditions under which the editorial staffs of journals of opinion function depend on the size and competence of their staffs and the financial resources at their disposal. Contrary to popular belief, "meeting deadlines" is not too formidable a problem if the staff is well-organized and experienced. To some extent the staff members have to limit themselves to writing on topics they have the time to study. But they gradually gain a command over their respective fields to a point where, if they are versatile journalists, they can extend their field of coverage. They usually develop contacts with people who are ready to make their specialized knowledge available on a moment's notice.

This is one reason why such journals are centered in New York City, where so many national organizations have their headquarters. The United Nations has made New York practically the capital of the world. New Yorkers, by the way, are remarkably responsive to requests for help from journalists they respect. And Washington is easily reached by phone from New York.

It can probably be said of any fairly competent journal of opinion—and I think this holds true of *America* and The Commonweal—that their writers probably know a great deal more about the subjects they write on than all but a very few of their readers and are better able to express their judgments in a given amount of space. Their readers have to spend their working hours in other fields and do well to find the time to read these condensations. They don't have to read any particular journal of opinion if they don't find it profitable, and they don't have to agree with it if they do read it. If they could do a much better job than the editors are doing, as is certainly possible, the question arises why they are not devoting their talents to this arduous, important and apostolic work.

It can be said in favor of our Catholic journals of opinion, I think, that they enjoy the respect of social scientists, philosophers, theologians and litterateurs teaching in our Catholic colleges and universities. The reason, no doubt, is that both address themselves to the study of public and cultural questions in the same serious, conscientious way. The editors are themselves, for the most part, products of our colleges

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and receive many contributions from persons identified with Catholic academic life.

One wonders sometimes whether other sections of the Catholic press would not profit by closer relations with specialists teaching in Catholic and other institutions of higher education. The gap between what appears in some American Catholic publications and what is taught in nearby Catholic colleges is unhealthy. Take the much-mooted question of "the liberal Catholic," or (if you prefer) "the Catholic liberal." Nobody teaching in a Catholic college is likely to confuse the type of liberalism involved in this discussion with the philosophical and theological liberalism condemned by Pope Pius IX. Yet one does not have to look far in the popular Catholic press to find this confusion made the basis of very sharp criticism of "the liberal Catholic."

The same applies to uncritical condemnation of "intellectuals" in some sections of the Catholic press. It simply doesn't make sense to students schooled to admire St. Augustine, St. Thomas, Gilson and Maritain—to name only a few Catholic intellectuals held in high honor on our campuses—to find intellectualism treated in some Catholic publications as if it were *per se* a disease. The cure for bad intellectualism is good intellectualism, just as the cure for bad philosophy and theology is good philosophy and theology. It is encouraging to see American Catholics of the stature of Dr. John Tracy Ellis and Bishop Wright deploring these Catholic attacks on intellectualism. Our Catholic journals of opinion have remained true to the great tradition of Christian culture by resisting the impatient anti-intellectualism which has unfortunately gained something of a vogue in some other Catholic publications.

THE GREAT achievement of our Catholic journals of opinion, to my mind, is that they have succeeded, by and large, in keeping the discussion of public questions at the high level our fellow-Americans, whether Catholic or not, have a right to expect of Catholic organs.

The Catholic journalist has three choices when confronted with the task of analyzing and reaching judgments about current issues against a Catholic background. He can side-step the tough issues on the score that he does not know enough about them to render a reliable opinion, or on the less admirable score that anything he says will be unpopular. This policy leads to triviality and to harping on issues where "we are right" and "they are wrong." The result is at best complacency, and at worst an evasion of the temporal mission of the Church.

Even less admirably, the Catholic journalist can make a stab in the dark at great issues, or (to change the figure) play by ear. He accepts the responsibility of the Catholic press to address itself to the whole spectrum of modern life in its social and public forms, but he does not accept the further responsibility of making sure of his ground before sounding off. One sometimes runs across evidence of ignorance in the Catholic press which is simply pitiful. Several years ago a Catholic publication, commenting on the involvement of the United States through the United Nations in the Korean War, declared that the American people objected strenuously to being sucked into the Korean War against their will. What could be further from the truth? The United States initiated the UN's defense of the Republic of Korea. We can never get involved in a UN enforcement action against our will for the simple reason that we possess a veto power in the Security Council. Such bloomers, of course, are not at all typical of American Catholic journalism.

The third choice open to the Catholic journalist is to study what he needs to know before writing on a public issue for the guidance of others. This is hard enough to do on well-staffed publications. It borders on the impossible for others, unless they count among their editors (as some do) one or two writers of very unusual talent and stamina. It is not a matter simply of learning "what the Church teaches" and of studying the "facts" about any given question. It means gaining a working knowledge of entire disciplines, such as economics, sociology, social psychology, political science (especially constitutional law) and education. Beyond such knowledge, of course, competent journal-of-opinion journalism requires balanced judgment and the great gift of prudence. Our Catholic journals of opinion, I am convinced, would make many mistakes they now avoid were it not for the many prayers offered in their behalf by devoted readers and friends.

By way of summing up, it can be said at once that neither *America* nor The Commonweal, to my knowledge, suffers under any illusions about measuring up in all respects to the ideal of a Catholic journal of opinion. Nevertheless, both publications have consistently enjoyed the friendly esteem of American professional journalists as a whole. Both address themselves to a national readership, and they help to form "public opinion with the Church" (to use Pope Pius XII's phrase) on a national scale. That they contribute at least towards defining the terms in which Catholics discuss public issues is shown by the frequency with which other Catholic periodicals take notice of what they say. In fact, their impact on American secular journalism as well is considerable.

Do these two Catholic journals of opinion exhaust the possibilities in this field in the United States? Their general outlook is similar, though one could

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point out noteworthy differences in the way they go about their weekly task. Theoretically, it seems to me that there is room for an American Catholic journal of opinion which might be more conservative than either *America* or The Commonweal. Whether such a competitor could succeed in escaping the downgrade of reactionism, and, if it did, could attract a sufficiently large body of readers to support it are open questions.

What puzzles me is why, with our Catholic colleges and universities turning out thousands upon thousands of graduates every year, our two existing journals of opinion have so much trouble expanding, and even maintaining, their limited circulations. Does the fault lie with them, with our Catholic institutions of higher learning, or with both? In a country as populous and as wealthy as the United States, the fault must lie somewhere. Perhaps it lies in "the American way," which seems to produce a cultural climate unpropitious to journals of opinion. If so, the remedial function of such reviews is all the more necessary to the health of American Catholic cultural life.

"CONTINUING DIALOGUE"

A Columnist's Lot

DONALD McDONALD

FOUR YEARS ago I began writing a weekly column for the *Catholic Messenger* of Davenport, Iowa. Today, the column appears in the *Catholic Messenger* and four other diocesan weeklies with a combined circulation of about 180,000. Three other editors for a time published the column and then dropped it.

Not a very great success, the column, at least by usual American standards which measure success in terms of size, power and other quantitative considerations. But then I was never under any illusion that my views and judgments would be acceptable to the majority of diocesan editors. Any columnist who criticizes the actions and ideas of Senator McCarthy, Senator Bricker and General MacArthur, who insists on reading Pope Pius XII "straight" when he comes out, for example, on behalf of the political federation of the world and the various welfare agencies of the United Nations, such a columnist finds that the market in the Catholic press for this kind of writing is sharply limited.

I have no personal complaints because of those limitations. But I think there is room for a general complaint. A Catholic press is not healthy in which the applied teachings of the Holy Father must wage an uphill fight for admission, in which criticism of political immorality is not tolerated, and arguments against what Pius XII recently called "selfish nationalism" are never printed. It is downright sick when, in addition to these negatives, the Catholic reader is confronted by editors who actually take up the cudgels for Senator McCarthy, isolationism and, yes, even "selfish nationalism," all, of course, in the name of "official" Catholicism.

PERHAPS the most rewarding experience in column writing is the continuing dialogue between writer and reader. Naturally it is always good, and to me exhilarating, to receive letters from my intellectual and spiritual betters who, in effect, tell me that this or that column has "hit the nail on the head."

But it is also good, in another way, to receive letters from, say, pro-McCarthy or pro-Bricker Catholics who tell me, not in effect but in fact, that I am a Communist and who enclose in their letters, for my education, hate literature directed against Jews and Negroes. There have not been many such extreme letters and most of them were received when I wrote a series of four columns in October, 1952, discussing the methods, not the motives, of the Senator from Wisconsin. But as recently as three or four months ago a column only obliquely mentioning the Senator drew from a Catholic woman in St. Louis the indignant remark: "I suppose the next person Mr. McDonald will attack will be Gerald L. K. Smith."

When I say it is "good" to receive such letters, I mean it is useful for me to know that the virus is still there and that, in some people, it is virtually irremovable. The extent of the virus is another question, perhaps an unanswerable one.

Mr. McDonald is a member of the staff of the *Catholic Messenger* of Davenport, Iowa.

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Judging from my correspondence on the McCarthy issue, for instance, I would say that the number of militant pro-McCarthyites is matched by the number of militant but not so strident anti-McCarthyites. In between lies the vast number of Catholics who are uncommitted, unconvinced, indifferent, or convinced but quiet in their convictions. I should say that very nearly the same alignment among Catholics would be found on the great issue of our age—whether the world, which can now destroy itself, will find some other method of effective control of armaments than the methods which have proved inadequate in the past: revocable pacts, treaties and alliances.

This division of opinion among American Catholics, again assuming that the correspondence I have received is an accurate cross-section, is, I think, no better or worse than the division of opinion one encounters in the American community at large. But this is a dubious honor. Catholics above all should be the first to recognize and part company with anyone who violates the ethical imperative that evil methods cannot be used in the pursuit of good objectives. And Catholics above all, as Pius XII has repeatedly said, and as Father John Courtney Murray recently said in the "Christianity issue" of *Life* magazine, should be the first to recognize the validity and contribute to the realization of an international political community.

I DO not, ordinarily, have an opportunity to carry on a lengthy correspondence with readers. But on one occasion I decided to test the persuasive power of unadorned truth and irrefutable evidence.

A reader in Chicago accused me of misinterpreting and misapplying Pius XII's counsel on the need for world federation. In his letter he said that the America First-ism of Clarence Manion, Father James Gillis and the Chicago *Tribune* was much closer to traditional Catholic teaching on the subject than was my own allegedly garbled analysis and application of Pius XII's thoughts.

In my reply I cited a number of unequivocal affirmations of federalism by the Holy Father and an equal number of his condemnations of the thesis that national sovereignty is an absolute and that a citizen has no obligation towards what Pius calls "the international community."

My Chicago correspondent replied that I was quoting Pius XII out of context, whereupon I mailed him half a dozen full texts of pertinent Papal addresses which had been printed in the *Catholic Messenger*. Two weeks elapsed and I received a two-page letter from my correspondent. I had indeed, he acknowledged, quoted and interpreted the Holy Father correctly, but the Holy Father, he said, is wrong; Clarence Manion, Father Gillis and the editors of the Chicago *Tribune* are right.

It was a hollow victory for me. It set me pondering an imponderable: how many Catholics are there in this country who have more confidence in the irrational politics of the ultra-nationalists than they have in the political wisdom of Pius XII? Not many perhaps; but even one is too many. A collateral question: how many Catholic editors and Communion-breakfast orators are responsible for this misplaced confidence of the American Catholics? The answer to that question is more ascertainable, and more scandalous.

TWO SUBJECTS draw more letters, and more thoughtful letters, than any other I have taken up in my column. The first of these is the question of apostolic action and the responsibility of the Catholic laity in both the spiritual and temporal order; the second is the question of family life, child training, guidance and discipline, and the formation of the child's character.

The Catholic laity in this country, let us say substantial numbers of them, are disturbed. They know, more or less inchoately, that they have serious apostolic responsibilities. They know they should be exerting a Christian influence on their fellow citizens in their work and in their social and cultural activities. But they are confused; they lack guidance and encouragement; and the Catholic organizations already in existence do not, they say, fill either the personal or apostolic void which they experience.

Such Catholics contribute, of course, to the Mass and sacrament statistics in the year-end computations of the "growth" of American Catholicism as set forth in the official directories. But if these statistics fool some, they do not fool the thinking Catholic who knows very well that growth is to be found and measured not in statistics but in life—his own life and the life of his fellowmen. He is not discerning the growth. And he is troubled because he knows he should be doing something about it but does not know what to do nor to whom he should turn.

The mystification and frustration of the apostolic Catholic deepen when he surveys the Catholic press and finds that the "mass circulation" publications are those which adhere to numerical Catholicism and Catholic group-centrism and seldom penetrate to the apostolic heart of the meaning of Catholicism. At the same time, he sees that the few publications which are dynamic and realistic must struggle along with sub-marginal circulation and seem, at times, to be the victims of a conspiracy of silence, if not outright attack, by some of their more affluent brothers in the Catholic press.

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This deep thirst for reality is also manifest among many Catholic parents. They desire, desperately, to help their children become saintly persons, fully human and spiritually mature. For such parents, pulpit and press imprecations against birth control and divorce are irrelevant; and cryptic, routine references, once or twice a year, to the Holy Family as their model are inadequate.

They are not, they tell me, "against piety" in the home—far from it. But they want, in addition, an insight into a sane psychology of childhood and of parent-child relations. They realize that parenthood is not an easy art and that to guide, form and discipline the character of a child the parent must have an understanding of the whole psychological context, the world, of childhood. They also realize, indistinctly perhaps, that even piety, if it is to subsist beyond the threshold of the home, must be introduced and developed with due consideration of that psychological context of childhood.

I HAVE no personal regrets as a columnist in the Catholic press. Several editors did not like my viewpoints and judgments, nor did they like to receive letters from their readers protesting those viewpoints and judgments, and they dropped the column, which was their right. The straw that broke one editor's back was my favorable reference to an article in the *Saturday Review*. In canceling me out, the editor charged me in general with making "false and at least insinuating" statements. I replied, properly I thought, that while it was his prerogative to maintain or dismiss any of his contributors, he had made a grave accusation against my integrity without offering any evidence. He said his staff would draw up a "bill of particulars." That was a year ago. I have not yet received the bill of particulars. Also some readers have indulged in invective and this is always disconcerting because it indicates that, in those cases, communication, rational intercourse, between writer and reader is not taking place. But all of these minuses are occupational hazards.

I have not intended here to draw a falsely gloomy picture of either the Catholic press or the Church in this country. I have merely drawn what I think are valid inferences from four years of column-writing and exchanging views with Catholics throughout the country.

I think the Catholic press is more realistic and genuinely useful now than it was ten years ago. And as for the Church in the U.S. at large there are signs of honest self-appraisal as the "religious sociologists" like Father Joseph Fichter, Father John L. Thomas and others continue to make known their findings and measurements of Catholic vitality.

THE SCREEN

VALENTINES FROM ABROAD

MOVIE theaters as well as audiences are now welcoming films from other countries. The newest batch, though interesting to selective moviegoers, is not likely to keep American theaters filled for long runs. Best of the lot is from England which sent, instead of the usual tense thriller or flip comedy, a heart-warming drama about life and death. Produced with loving care by Michael Balcon and directed by Charles Frend, who uses cinema beautifully to illustrate his themes, "Lease of Life" is about a middle-aged vicar in a small English village who was never well off financially but who enjoyed thoroughly what life gave him. He takes with calm a series of events that would throw most men: he is told by his doctor that he has only a year to live, and he and his uncomplaining wife (Kay Walsh) cannot scrape up enough money to support their pianist daughter (Adrienne Corri) who won a scholarship in London. He even muffs an opportunity to give a stuffy sermon that would land him a job as chaplain at the cathedral school, but the sermon he does give (about life being neither a vale of tears nor a series of prohibitions) fascinates the youngsters and wins the interest of the newspapers who misquote him about throwing away the rules. Robert Donat plays the lead with charming equanimity, whether the vicar is going through troubled or happy times, and he never confuses the role with Pollyanna. With quiet restraint, the film effectively uses sight and sound to put over the vicar's point: "When you've come to terms with death, you've come to terms with life too."

TWO films don't make a trend, of course, but it is curious that the English should send over another movie with a similar theme. Perhaps it is even more odd that Carol Reed, who thrilled audiences with "Night Train," "Odd Man Out" and "The Fallen Idol," should have produced and directed such a folksy drama as "Lucky Kid," which is concerned with an assortment of people living in London's grubby Petticoat Lane district. The script, written by Wolf Mankowitz from his own book *A Kid for Two Farthings,* is stretched too long and too thin. The story, about a youngster who thinks his one-horned kid is a unicorn and responsible for the good luck that comes to his elders, has a certain charm, but its characters are theatrical caricatures. Mr. Reed's direction makes the little boy (Jonathan Ashmore) very appealing, but he is less successful with the grown-ups: Celia Johnson as the boy's mother, David Kossoff as a philosophical tailor, Joe Robinson as a muscle-man very much im-

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pressed with his own physique, Diana Dors as a blonde cutie waiting for Joe to marry her, and Primo Carnera as a mean and brutal wrestler. After much time and whimsy "Lucky Kid' gets to the point: "Give life every chance, even when it gives you nothing."

AS if to prove that they can make soap operas too, the Japanese turn up with "Golden Demon," which has some of the beauty and color of "Gate of Hell," but none of the depth of "Rashomon" or "Ugetsu." Directed by Koji Shima, who also wrote the script from the novel by Koyo Ozaki, "Golden Demon" plods along with a tale of star-crossed lovers whose happiness is ruined by that old devil, money. In Tokyo of the 1890's after the lovely heroine (Fujiko Yamamoto) is pushed by her parents into a loveless marriage with a wealthy playboy, her bitter ex-fiancé (Jun Negami) becomes a money-lender and builds up quite a pile by dealing with his clients ruthlessly. It is unfortunate that the film's effective cinematic imagery was wasted on a story that becomes more and more contrived as it races down its melodramatic path; soap opera addicts, however, may enjoy all this suffering so handsomely embellished with Japanese costumes and sets in Eastman Color.

EQUALLY contrived, in its own fashion, is "Riviera," an Italian offering about a prostitute (Martine Carol) who goes to a seaside resort, not for business but for a vacation with her small daughter. Director Alberto Lattuada means to tell a story of rehabilitation, but the script stacks the cards so obviously—all the characters except the prostitute and the town's major (Raf Vallone) are fourflushers and mean-spirited—that the picture lacks the realism it aims at. It was photographed on the Italian Riviera in Ferraniacolor, and the shots of the hotels and beaches, as well as some of the satire on the summer morals of the large middle class who hang out in these places, are interesting, but one is too conscious of the director's efforts to make a shocker about the well-meaning prostitute.

EVEN more obvious in its attempts to shock is a French item called "Adorable Creatures," which tells the story of a young man (Daniel Gelin) who lies to his bride (Antonella Lualdi) when he insists that she is his first love. Flashbacks show us the true story; and the scenes of his pre-marital affairs with Danielle Darrieux, Martine Carol (who plays an expensively kept woman this time) and Edwige Feuillere are done with undisguised frankness. No doubt Director Christian-Jaque intended to spoof other sexy French films, but his picture is done in such poor taste (he even includes several scenes with a lesbian who has practically no connection with the plot) that his good cast cannot save his joke from falling flat.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

THE STAGE

PIRANDELLO

OF THE four great dramatists who have given us the most profound versions of modern life in histrionic terms—Ibsen and Shaw, Pirandello, Chekhov—Pirandello alone has been denied, in our time, the fullness of stage life. Shaw is adequately served by our theater: if not always with excellence, then at the very least with a certain status and currency and continuing interest—respect too, though perhaps not for the proper things. Ibsen indeed demands some reconstitution—one might say we have never known the essential Ibsen—yet the flinty austere beauty of his drama is variously recognized, and the rich theatrical occasions his plays offer not infrequently seized. And a ritual piety dictates the occasional Chekhov revival, though we have had to wait for Mr. David Ross and his company at the Fourth Street Theatre to give us a full and pure account of this one great scale in contemporary drama. But Pirandello languishes, wanting insistently—like one of the hooded black presences in "Six Characters"—the total life of the imagination. Prior to the mounting of this same play, currently at the Phoenix, I recall no representations of Pirandello on our stage beyond the usual intermittent experimental skirmishes (the Living Theatre Group will revive this spring what I understand to be an excellent version of "Tonight We Improvise"), and Mr. Eric Bentley's production of the masterly "Right You Are" some summers ago at the Brattle Theatre, Cambridge.

A prodigal indifference, this—scandalous—when one considers that "Six Characters," "Right You Are," "Henry IV" (to instance but three) are among the most absolute plays in the contemporary repertoire: works which sustain powerfully the weight and intense pressure of the modern sensibility: existential drama, if you will—lucid with a daylight disillusion and terror, yet dense with the flood and torment of being. No longer need one claim for Pirandello the special immunity of experimental or avant-garde theater: the passionate dilemmas—dualities—of his drama, their metaphysical agonies, are the same nightmare shapes and two-backed beasts that haunt the private dreams of our age. For to explore so obsessively, as Pirandello has, ". . . the deceit of mutual understanding irremediably founded on the

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empty abstraction of words, the multiple personality of everyone (corresponding to the possibilities of being to be found in each of us), and finally the inherent tragic conflict between life (which is always moving and changing) and form (which fixes it, immutable) . . ." is to dissolve with a visionary acid the veils of appearance and reality and confront something naked, ultimate. At one point in his autobiography, Mr. Stephen Spender quotes Yeats on Shakespeare: "In the end, Shakespeare's mind is terrible . . . the final reality of existence in his poetry is of a terrible kind." One could not more potently express the nature of Pirandello's particular domination—what Stark Young calls his "high and violent world of concepts and living."

It is only in the perspective of this metaphysical grandeur—yet nothing alien or remote about it: always quick, intimate, bourgeois, and hence the more awful —and the neglect that our theater has imposed on him, that one can judge how bitter an insult to Pirandello is the production of "Six Characters In Search of An Author" at the Phoenix. I have not seen, at this theater which promised so much and yet has scored such a lamentable record, quite so wanton an act of dramatic mutilation. It would be possible, I suppose, to claim for Mr. Tyrone Guthrie's production theatrical life within some plausible context: certainly, however, it is not Pirandello's—either the context or the life—and nowhere has new value been created or disclosed: the context is ever so much poorer, duller, less significant, and the life thin, flippant, common. Mr. Guthrie, elsewhere so distinguished and responsible a man of the theater, is here the sportive fawn: he has come up, vulgarly, with what he takes to be the "real truth" about Pirandello—that he was a *farceur* and a metaphysical playboy, that the stain of agony which colors his work can be lightened, not with wit (it can, and is—by Pirandello), but with impertinence.

Hence Mr. Guthrie's useless pedantry in staging so timeless a drama in the bizarre costumes of 1922, the year of its first American production—a gesture, one suspects, adopted only to evoke another "Boy Friend" *frisson,* all baubles, bangles, beads and boas. Hence the outrageous parody in which the "real" actors indulge when they are attempting to reproduce the domestic tragedy of the six characters. Hence, too, the blunting of some of Pirandello's most suggestive motifs —the disposition of the sinister Madame Pace, for example, in a cheaply effective flash of Houdini smoke. This last instance is wholly characteristic of Mr. Guthrie's abrasive manipulation of the play, which begins by coarsening, and ends by corrupting it: for nothing could expose more patently his total misreading of "Six Characters" than the new ending he has fashioned and imposed on it. The profound terror which has been gathering through the play—the awareness that imagination has preempted reality, has indeed created its own reality—and which is brought finally to a violent and terrible birth, is here reduced to the dimensions of fraud, while a mocking off-stage voice ("Laugh, Clown, Laugh," shall we say?) is heard announcing a banal epistemological cliché which the philosopher in Pirandello would austerely have scorned.

In accordanee with the economic law which rigidly governs the fortunes of minority drama in our theater, we shall probably have no professional representation of Pirandello in this city for at least another decade, and thanks to Mr. Guthrie and the directors of the Phoenix, we may shore against that loss only these grotesque memories.

RICHARD HAYES.

COMMUNICATIONS

"CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL RESPONSIBILITY"

Cincinnati, Ohio

TO the Editors: I read with the greatest interest the excerpts from the article in *Thought* by Father Ellis, reprinted in The Commonweal's "Of Note" for November 11, 1955, and I feel compelled to add a comment or two on the subject of American Catholics and the intellectual life. . . .

I agree, for instance, that many Catholic colleges seemed to be engaged in a rather senseless, and perhaps suicidal, competition with one another, and with neighboring secular institutions. Further, this competition seems, for the most part, to be concentrated in the development of all of the familiar impedimenta of American collegiate life, including semi-professional athletics, and specialized vocational training courses. I agree that there seems to be a depressing absence of the love of scholarship among both students and faculty members in the Catholic universities in comparison with that to be found in the secular schools. Only in the science courses, it has seemed to me, is there evident the kind of enthusiasm for, and devotion to, learning which is the hallmark of the great secular universities. There are, of course, some wonderfully heartening exceptions to this dismal condition among both Catholic students and teachers. . . .

Father Ellis has mentioned, with considerable perception, the tragedy of the American Catholics' "betrayal of that which is peculiarly their own." Having lost to a great degree the singular and distinguishing quality that was theirs alone, the Catholics now attempt in a half-hearted way to become something that they are not, and can never become. The truly

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Catholic university cannot give itself over unrestrainedly to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, because ingrained in the fiber of the Church since the days of Paul has been the knowledge that the "wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." Father Ellis has recognized some rather curious manifestations of this spirit which seem presently to inhibit the intellectual vitality of the American Catholic universities, and he warns that if Albertus Magnus had unduly emphasized this view we might have been deprived of the achievements of Thomistic philosophy.

But the other half of the coin is this: *Saint* Thomas Aquinas left the *Summa* unfinished, and devoted his mind and energies during the last months of his life to contemplation, and the pursuit of "the wisdom of God, mysterious, hidden, which God foreordained before the world for our glory, a wisdom which none of the rulers of this world has known." And *that* act, and *that* wisdom, are really beyond the ken of those truly distinguished teachers at Chicago, Princeton, and St. John's, who have recently contributed so magnificently to the revival of scholastic philosophy and genuine scholarship, while their Catholic colleagues have watched with more or less silent awe and envy.

Both sides of the coin must then be known, for as we see, the knowledge of one does not necessarily lead to the knowledge of the other. This is the full Catholic heritage which we have lost, and which must be rediscovered and restored. I should guess that no one outside the Church (and perhaps not all who regard themselves as within it) could understand and appreciate the fact that the life of St. Thomas embodies a natural and unbroken progression to the complete fulfillment of the ideal of the Catholic scholar and university man. The inability to understand the full meaning of this truth might, in some respects at least, be the measure of one's separation from the mind of the Church. One group, of course, would lament the foolishness of St. Thomas's failure to finish his great work; and the other would deplore the folly of his having started it.

Those in the first group would be the intellectual descendants of Erasmus, the incomparable scholar and humanist; and the others—to some degree, at least—would be the progeny of Luther, who regarded learning as the snare of the Devil. My conviction is that the historical quarrel carried on by these two giants, and by their descendants down to the present day, embodies in its most dramatic form the nature and the form of the very profound conflict which buffets and bewilders contemporary Catholic education in America.

Before taking sides in this age-old fight it is well to remember that the Church pronounced the works and pomps of both to be anathema.

JOHN J. GILLIGAN.

REPLY

Washington, D.C.

I HAVE read Mr. Gilligan's communication with great care and appreciation, and with a number of the interesting points he makes I find myself in complete agreement. Obviously it is impossible in the space allotted to touch on all the questions he raises. I shall, therefore, confine myself to two or three.

In the fifth paragraph of his letter, it seems to me, Mr. Gilligan has drawn a false inference from the words he quotes from St. Paul. The trouble may be due to the fact that he quoted only half the verse from *Corinthians,* I, 3:19. In the second half Paul made clear the type of worldly wisdom he had in mind by quoting Job who said, "He [God] frustrates the plans of the cunning, so that their hands achieve no success." And it should be added that at that point Job continued: "He catches the wise in their own ruses, and the designs of the crafty are routed" [V, 12-13]. With that type of wisdom the Church has, indeed, always been at war. But it is surely not correct to equate the wisdom of the "cunning" and the "crafty" with that of scholars in pursuit of knowledge, as Mr. Gilligan would seem to do if his quotation from St. Paul is placed in the full context. He is, however, quite correct in saying that the Catholic university cannot give itself unrestrainedly to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Knowledge has to be related to an end, and in the case of the Catholic scholar that end is his eternal destiny. Yet that ultimate goal is in no way irreconcilable with a life entirely devoted to scholarship as a means by which one following the vocation of an intellectual seeks to work out his destiny in this world as a child of God and to enrich the store of human knowledge for the advancement of the divine mission of the Church of which the scholar is a member.

Nor is the example taken from St. Thomas Aquinas an illustration of a necessary conflict of interests in this connection. There are, to be sure, two sides to the life of a Catholic scholar, the same as there are two sides to the life of every other Catholic, namely, his life as a member of the Mystical Body of Christ wherein by the supernatural means placed at his disposal by the Church he strives to grow daily in union with God, and his life as a member of the university faculty, a learned society, or any other intellectual community wherein by his study, research, writing, and lecturing he strives to employ to the utmost the talents that God has given him for the advancement of truth. But there is no contradiction between the two sides of the coin, although the emphasis given to each will vary with every individual. For example, Father Louis, the Trappist monk, and Thomas Merton, the writer of spiritual treatises, are combined in the

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one man who, with the permission of his superiors in one of the Church's strictest contemplative orders, harmonizes both to the apparent satisfaction of his superiors and to the very evident enrichment of the minds of thousands of readers of his books. That St. Thomas should have left the *Summa* unfinished in order to devote the closing months of his life to contemplation on death and the hereafter represented nothing more than a legitimate personal choice on the part of the great doctor. For to paraphrase Cardinal Gibbons' remark concerning the difference in Church-State relations in the United States and other lands, "Other countries, other manners," so we may say at this point, "Other saints, other manners." Robert Bellarmine, for instance, whose sanctity and scholarship are both beyond question, continued to write up to the time when he had to take to his bed from physical exhaustion. Again there is the example of St. Francis de Sales who would qualify as both saint and scholar. Two days before he died he remarked to his servants: "I notice that my eyesight is failing badly. That means that I have not long to live. . . . Nevertheless we shall go on living as long as God shall will." And the great Bishop of Geneva spent the entire day hearing confessions and interviewing neighboring noblemen and religious there at Lyons before his death on the following night. So long, therefore, as a scholar has the proper motivation there is nothing in Catholic theology to suggest that he should cease his scholarly pursuits even at the approach of death.

It is altogether true that both sides of Mr. Gilligan's coin must be known, and it is likewise true that the side of natural knowledge will not necessarily lead to a scholar's supernatural enlightenment. But by the same token there is no contradiction between the two, nor is there any necessity of laying aside the natural out of fear of its damaging the supernatural element in one's life. In fact, the latter thrives best in many men when grounded on a firm foundation of the former. To suggest otherwise is, I fear, to lend encouragement to the view that there is something inherently wrong in the conduct of a Catholic who displays an ardent and passionate love of scholarship and research. That there have been Catholics who have made secular learning a sort of cultus and have, as a consequence, lost sight of the ultimate goal of life, union with God in eternity, is true. Yet the excesses of these few give no warrant for the conclusion that secular knowledge and distinction therein are to be shunned or feared. While most of us do not possess the splendid balance and harmonious blending of the supernatural and natural knowledge that characterized the lives of the great saints-scholars in the history of the Church, such an ideal is possible of attainment for us on a more modest scale if we would but follow persistently the old spiritual maxim to "work as though everything depended upon us, and pray as though everything depended upon God."

(*Rev.*) JOHN TRACY ELLIS,
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"PRACTICAL MEN"

Fairfield, Conn.

TO the Editors: The use by the Rev. Bernard C. Murchland, C.S.C., ["Communications," Jan. 6] of the quotation from Chesterton stating "the practical man cannot be expected to improve the impracticable muddle for he cannot clear the muddle of his own mind" is a source of serious concern. The practical man often gains the important position where world policy can be influenced. It is the duty of educational institutions—and the value of Catholic institutions—to make sure that men who will become leaders in business, engineering, and science (as well as in religion, education, law, etc.) will receive the necessary principles by which to live. This means that in each of the various fields of modern culture, a balanced curriculum must be available which includes philosophy taught for its intellectual and practical worth and presented in such a way as to obtain the respect of the student.

The students can be made aware of the fact that philosophy is necessary to correct thought and life without "abridging philosophy." If the students can realize the ultimate aims of philosophy, they will accept the intellectual—seemingly abstract, but not far-fetched—framework to the extent, at least, that engineers accept basic science courses. Of course, the problem of the definition of practical arises because some people use practical and materialistic interchangeably. Practical should mean simply to be able to be put to use, and philosophical principles have a definite use in accomplishing what should be man's most important object in life.

It does not follow that a man must either be practical or have principles. If students are given such an alternative, the ones with principles may not be in positions to "draw the world into the realm of" their "own ideals and philosophy." Practical men without principles but with significant influence are indeed a danger. The expounding of fundamentals and ideals must not be done so as to cause resentment in young minds followed by a retreat into the rationalization that to be materialistically practical is all that really counts. Bishop Wright's aim (December 16) was for students to appreciate eventually intellectualism and to become intellectuals, not to separate men into intellectual and practical. Why can't a man be intellectual and practical?

JOHN A. BARONE.

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SHORT STORY

Zeal

J. F. POWERS

SOUTH of St. Paul the conductor appeared at the head of the coach, held up his ticket punch, and clicked it.

The Bishop felt for his ticket. It was there.

"I know it's not a pass," said Father Early. He had been talking across the aisle to one of the pilgrims he was leading to Rome, but now he was back on the subject of the so-called clergy pass. "But it is a privilege."

The Bishop said nothing. He'd meant to imply by his silence before, when Father Early brought up the matter, that there was nothing wrong with an arrangement which permitted the clergy to travel in parlor cars at coach rates. The Bishop wished the arrangement were in effect in all parts of the country, and on all trains.

"But on a run like this, Bishop, with these fine coaches, I daresay there aren't many snobs who'll go to the trouble of filling out the form."

The Bishop looked away. Father Early had a nose like a parrot's and something on it like psoriasis that held the Bishop's attention—unfortunately, for Father Early seemed to think it was his talk. The Bishop had a priest or two in his diocese like Father Early.

"Oh, the railroads, I daresay, mean well."

"Yes," said the Bishop, distantly. The voice at his right ear went on without him. He gazed out the window, up at the limestone scarred by its primeval intercourse with the Mississippi, now shrunk down to itself, and there he saw a cave, another cave, and another. Criminals had been discovered in them, he understood, and ammunition from the Civil War, and further down the river, in the high bluffs, rattlesnakes were said to be numerous still.

"Bishop, I don't think I'm one to strain at a gnat." (The Bishop glanced at Father Early's nose with interest.) "But I must say I fear privilege more than persecution. Of course the one follows the other, as the night the day."

"Is it true, Father, that there are rattlesnakes along here?"

"Very likely," said Father Early, hardly bothering to look out the window. "Bishop, I was dining in New York, in a crowded place, observed by all and sundry, when the management tried to present me with a bottle of wine. Well!"

The Bishop, spying a whole row of caves, thought of the ancient Nile. Here, though, the country was too fresh and frigid. Here the desert fathers would've married early and gone fishing. The aborigines, by their fruits, pretty much proved that. He tried again to interrupt Father Early. "There must be a cave for you up here, somewhere, Father."

Father Early responded with a laugh that sounded exactly like ha-ha, no more or less. "I'll tell you a secret, Bishop. When I was in seminary, they called me Crazy Early. I understand they still do. Perhaps you knew."

"No," said the Bishop. Father Early flattered himself. The Bishop had never heard of him until that day.

"I thought perhaps Monsignor Reed had told you."

"I seldom see him." He saw Reed only by accident, at somebody's funeral or jubilee celebration or, it seemed, in railroad stations, which had happened again in Minneapolis that morning. It was Reed who had introduced Father Early to him then. Had Reed known what he was doing? It was six hours to Chicago, hours of this . . .

"I suppose you know Macaulay's *England,* Bishop."

"No." There was something to be gained by a frank admission of ignorance when it was assumed anyway.

"Read the section dealing with the status of the common clergy in the 18th century. I'm talking about the Anglican clergy. Hardly the equal of servants, knaves, figures of fun! The fault of the Reformation, you say? Yes, of course"—the Bishop had in no way signified assent—"but I say it could happen anywhere, everywhere, anytime! Take what's going on in parts of Europe today. When you consider the status of the Church there in the past, and the overwhelmingly Catholic population even now. I wonder, though, if it doesn't take something to bring us to our senses from time to time—*now* what do you say, Bishop?"

If the conductor hadn't been upon them, the Bishop would've said there was probably less danger of the clergy getting above themselves than there was of their being accepted for less than they were; or at least for less than they were supposed to be; or was that what Father Early was saying?

The conductor took up their tickets, placed two receipts overhead, one white and one blue. Before he moved on, he advised the Bishop to bring his receipt with him, the blue one, when he moved into the parlor car.

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The Bishop nodded serenely.

Beside him, Father Early was full of silence, and opening his breviary.

The Bishop, who had expected to be told apologetically that it was a matter of no importance if he'd used his clergy pass, had an uncomfortable feeling that Father Early was praying for him.

AT WINONA, the train stopped for a minute. The Bishop from his window saw Father Early on the platform below talking to an elderly woman. In parting, they pecked at each other, and she handed him a box. Returning to his seat, he said he'd had a nice visit with his sister. He went to the head of the coach with the box, and came slowly back down the aisle, offering the contents to the pilgrims. "Divinity? Divinity?" The Bishop, when his turn came, took a piece, and consumed it. Then he felt committed to stay with Father Early until Chicago.

It was some time before Father Early returned to his seat—from making the acquaintance of Monsignor Reed's parishioners. "What we did was split the responsibility. Miss Culhane's in charge of Monsignor's people. Of course, the ultimate responsibility is mine." Peering up the aisle at two middle-aged women drawing water from the cooler, Father Early said, "The one coming this way now," and gazed out the window.

Miss Culhane, a paper cup in each hand, smiled at the Bishop. He smiled back.

When Miss Culhane had passed, Father Early said, "She's been abroad once, and that's more than most of 'em can say. She's a secretary in private life, and it's hard to find a man with much sense of detail. But I don't know . . . From what I've heard already I'd say the good people don't like the idea. I'm afraid they think she stands between them and me."

The other woman, also carrying paper cups, came down the aisle, and again Father Early gazed out the window. So did the Bishop. When the woman had gone by, Father Early commented dryly: "Her friend, whose name escapes me. Between the two of 'em, Bishop . . . Oh, it'll be better for all concerned when Monsignor joins us."

The Bishop knew nothing about this. Reed had told him nothing. *"Monsignor?"*

"Claims he's allergic to trains."

"Reed?"

Again Father Early treated the question as rhetorical. "His plane doesn't arrive until noon tomorrow. We sail at four. That doesn't give us much time in New York."

The Bishop was putting it all together. Evidently Reed was planning to have as much privacy as he could on the trip. Seeing his little flock running around loose in the station, though, he must have felt guilty—and then the Bishop had happened along. Would Reed do this to him? Reed had done this to him. Reed had once called the Bishop's diocese the next thing to a titular see.

"I'm sorry he isn't sailing with us," said Father Early.

"Isn't he?"

"He's got business of some kind—stained glass, I believe—that'll keep him in New York for a few days. He may have to go to Boston. So he's flying over. I wonder, Bishop, if he isn't allergic to boats too." Father Early smiled at the Bishop as one good sailor to another.

The Bishop wasn't able to smile back. He was thinking how much he preferred to travel alone. When he was being hustled into the coach by Reed and Father Early, he hadn't considered the embarrassment there might be in the end; together on the train to Chicago and again on the one to New York and then crossing on the same liner, apart, getting an occasional glimpse of each other across the barriers. The perfidious Reed had united them, knowing full well that the Bishop was traveling first class and that Father Early and the group were going tourist. The Bishop hoped there would be time for him to see Reed in New York. According to Father Early, though, Reed didn't want them to look for him until they saw him. The Bishop wouldn't.

Miss Culhane, in the aisle again, returned with more water. When she passed, the Bishop and Father Early were both looking out the window. "You can't blame 'em," Father Early said. "I wish he'd picked a man for the job. No, they want more than a man, Bishop. They want a priest."

"They've got you," said the Bishop. "And Monsignor will soon be with you."

"Not until we reach Rome."

"No?" The Bishop was rocked by this new evidence of Reed's ruthlessness. Father Early and the group were going to Ireland and England first, as the Bishop was, but they'd be spending more time in those countries, about two weeks.

"No," said Father Early. "He won't."

The Bishop got out his breviary. He feared that

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Father Early would not be easily discouraged. The Bishop, if he could be persuaded to join the group, would more than make up for the loss of Reed. To share the command with such a man as Father Early, however, would be impossible. It would be to serve under him—as Reed may have realized. The Bishop would have to watch out. It would be dangerous for him to offer Father Early plausible excuses, to point out, for instance, that they'd be isolated from each other once they sailed from New York. Such an excuse, regretfully tendered now, could easily commit him to service on this train, and on the next one, and in New York—and the Bishop wasn't at all sure that Father Early wouldn't find a way for him to be with the group aboard ship. The Bishop turned a page.

When Father Early rose and led the pilgrims in the recitation of the rosary, the Bishop put aside his breviary, took out his beads and prayed along with them. After that, Father Early directed the pilgrims in the singing of "Onward, Christian Soldiers"—which was *not* a Protestant hymn, not originally, he said. Monsignor Reed's parishioners didn't know the words, but Father Early got around that difficulty by having everyone sing the notes of the scale, the ladies *la,* the men *do*. The Bishop cursed his luck and wouldn't even pretend to sing. Father Early was in the aisle, beating time with his fist, exhorting some by name to contribute more to the din, clutching others (males) by the shoulders until they did. The Bishop grew afraid that even he might not be exempt, and again sought the protection of his breviary.

HE HAD an early lunch. When he returned to his seat, it was just past noon, and Father Early was waiting in the aisle for him.

"How about a bite to eat, Bishop?"

"I've eaten, Father."

"You eat early, Bishop."

"I couldn't wait."

Father Early did his little ha-ha laugh. "By the way, Bishop, are you planning anything for the time we'll have in Chicago between trains?" Before the Bishop, who was weighing the significance of the question, could reply, Father Early told him that the group was planning a visit to the Art Institute. "The Art Treasures of Vienna are there now."

"I believe I've seen them, Father."

"In Vienna, Bishop?"

"Yes."

"Well, they should be well worth seeing again."

"Yes. But I don't think I'll be seeing them." Not expecting the perfect silence that followed—this from Father Early was more punishing than his talk—the Bishop added: "Not today." Then, after more of that silence, "I've nothing planned, Father." Quickly, not liking the sound of that: "I do have a few things I might do."

Father Early nodded curtly and went away.

The Bishop heard him inviting some of the group to have lunch with him.

During the rest of the afternoon, the indefatigable voice of Father Early came to the Bishop from all over the coach, but the man himself didn't return to his seat. And when the train pulled into the station, Father Early wasn't in the coach. The Bishop guessed he was with the conductor, to whom he had a lot to say, or with the other employees of the railroad who never seem to be around at the end of a journey. Stepping out of the coach, the Bishop felt like a free man.

Miss Culhane, however, was waiting for him. She introduced him to an elderly couple, the Doyles, who were the only ones in the group not planning to visit the Art Institute. Father Early, she said, understood that the Bishop wasn't planning to do anything in Chicago and would be grateful if the Bishop would keep an eye on the Doyles there. They hadn't been there before.

The Bishop showed them Grant Park from a taxicab, and pointed out the Planetarium, the Aquarium, the Field Museum. "Thought it was the stockyards," Mr. Doyle commented on Soldier's Field, giving Mrs. Doyle a laugh. "I'm afraid there isn't time to go there," the Bishop said. He was puzzled by the Doyles. They didn't seem to realize the sightseeing was for them. He tried them on foot in department stores until he discovered from something Mrs. Doyle said, that they were bearing with him. Soon after that they were standing across the street from the Art Institute, with the Bishop asking if they didn't want to cross over and join the group inside. Mr. Doyle said he didn't think they could make it over there alive—a reference to the heavy traffic, serious or not, the Bishop couldn't tell, but offered to take them across. The Doyles could not be tempted. So the three of them wandered around some more, the Doyles usually a step or two behind the Bishop. At last, in the lobby of the Congress Hotel, Mrs. Doyle expressed a desire to sit down. And there they sat, three in a row, in silence, until it was time to take a cab to the station. On the way over, Mr. Doyle, watching the meter, said, "These things could sure cost you."

In the station the Bishop gave the Doyles a gentle shove in the direction of the gate through which some members of the group were passing. A few minutes later, after a visit to the newsstand, he went through the gate unaccompanied. As soon as he entered his pullman his ears informed him that he'd reckoned without Mr. Hope, the travel agent in Minneapolis. Old pastors wise in the ways of the world and to the escapist urge to which so many of the men, sooner or

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later succumbed, thinking it only love of travel, approved of Mr. Hope's system. If Mr. Hope had a priest going somewhere, he tried to make it a pair; dealt two, he worked for three of a kind; and so on—nuns, of course, were wild, their presence eminently sobering. All day the Bishop had thought the odds safely against their having accommodations in the same pullman car, but he found himself next door to Father Early.

THEY had dinner together. In the Bishop's view, it was fortunate that the young couple seated across the table was resilient from drink. Father Early opened up on the subject of tipping.

"These men," he said, his glance taking in several waiters and his mouth almost in the ear of the one who was serving them, a cross-looking colored man, "are in a wonderful position to assert their dignity as human beings—which dignity, being from God, may not be sold with impunity. And for a mere pittance at that! Or, what's worse, bought!"

The Bishop, laying down his soup spoon, sat gazing out the window, for which he was again grateful. It was getting dark. The world seen from a train always looked sadder then. Indiana. Ohio next, but he wouldn't see it. Pennsylvania, perhaps, in the early morning, if he didn't sleep well.

"I see what you mean," he heard the young woman saying, "but I just charge it up to expenses."

"Ah, ha," said Father Early. "Then you don't see what I mean."

"Oh, don't I? Well, it's not important. And *please* —don't explain."

The Bishop, coloring, heard nothing from Father Early and thanked God for that. They had been coming to this, or something like it, inevitably they had. And again the Bishop suffered the thought that the couple was associating him with Father Early.

When he had served dessert across the table, the waiter addressed himself to Father Early. "As far as I'm concerned, sir, you're right," he said, and moved off.

The young woman, watching the waiter go, said, "He can't do that to me."

Airily, Father Early was saying, "And this time tomorrow we'll be on our way to Europe."

The Bishop was afraid the conversation would lapse entirely—which might have been the best thing for it in the long run—but the young man was nodding.

"Will this be your first trip?" asked the young woman. She sounded as though she thought it would be.

"My fifth, God willing," Father Early said. "I don't mean that as a commentary on the boat we're taking. Only as a little reminder to myself that we're all of us hanging by a thread here, only a heart's beat from eternity. Which doesn't mean we shouldn't do our best while here. On the contrary. Some people think Catholics oppose progress here below. Look on your garbage can and what do you see? Galvanized. Galvan was a Catholic. Look on your light bulb. Watts. Watt was a Catholic. The Church never harmed Galileo."

Father Early, as if to see how he was doing, turned to the Bishop. The Bishop, however, was dining with his reflection in the window. He had displayed a spark of interest when Father Early began to talk of the trip, believing there was to be a change of subject matter, but Father Early had tricked him.

"And how long in Rome?" asked the young woman.

"Only two days. Some members of the group intend to stay longer, but they won't return with me. Two days doesn't seem long enough, does it? Well, I can't say that I care for Rome. I didn't feel at home there, or anywhere on the continent. We'll have two good weeks in the British Isles."

"Some people don't travel to feel at home," said the young woman.

To this Father Early replied: "Ireland first and then England. It may interest you to know that about half of the people in the group are carrying the complete works of Shakespeare. I'm hoping the rest of the group will manage to secure copies of the plays and read them before we visit Stratford."

"It sounds like a large order," said the young woman.

"Paperback editions are to be had everywhere," Father Early said with enthusiasm. "By the way, what book would you want if you were shipwrecked on a desert island?"

Apparently the question had novelty for the young man. "That's a hard one," he said.

"Indeed it is. Chesterton, one of the great Catholic writers, said he'd like a manual of shipbuilding, but I don't consider that a serious answer to the question. I'll make it two books because, of course, you'd want the Bible. Some people think Catholics don't read the Bible. But who preserved Scripture in the dark ages? Holy monks. Now what do you say? No. Ladies first."

"I think I'd like that book on shipbuilding," said the young woman.

Father Early smiled. "And you, sir?"

"Shakespeare, I guess."

"I was hoping you'd say that."

Then the Bishop heard the young woman inquiring: "Shakespeare wasn't a Catholic, was he?"

The Bishop reached for his glass of water, and saw Father Early observing a moment of down-staring silence. When he spoke his voice was deficient. "As a matter of fact, we don't know. Arguments both ways. But we just don't know. Perhaps it's better that way," he said, and that was all he said. At last he was eating his dinner.

When the young couple rose to leave, the Bishop,

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who had been waiting for this moment, turned in time to see the young man almost carry out Father Early's strict counsel against tipping. With one look, however, the young woman prevailed over him. The waiter came at once and removed the tip. With difficulty, the Bishop put down the urge to comment. He wanted to say that he believed people should do what they could do, little though it might be, and shouldn't be asked to attempt what was obviously beyond them. The young woman who probably thought Father Early was just tight was better off than the young man.

After the waiter came and went again Father Early sat back and said, "I'm always being surprised by the capacity ordinary people have for sacrifice."

The Bishop swallowed what—again—would have been his comment. Evidently Father Early was forgetting about the young man.

"Thanks for looking after the Doyles. I would've asked you myself but I was in the baggage car. Someone wanted me to say hello to a dog that's going to South Bend. No trouble, were they? What'd you see?"

The Bishop couldn't bring himself to answer either question. "It's hard to know what other people want to do," he said. "They might've had a better guide."

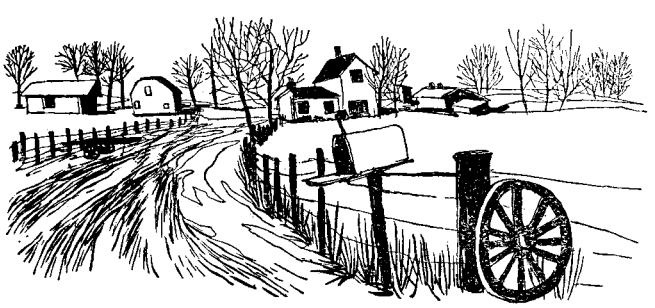
"I can tell you they enjoyed your company, Bishop."

"Oh?" The Bishop, though touched, had a terrible vision of himself doing the capitals of the world with the Doyles.

Father Early handed the Bishop a cigar. "Joe Quirke keeps me well supplied with these," he said, nodding to a beefy middle-aged man two tables away who looked pleased at having caught Father Early's eye. "I believe you know him."

"I met him," the Bishop said, making a distinction. Mr. Quirke had sat down next to him in the club car before dinner, taken up a magazine, put it down after a minute, and offered to buy the Bishop a drink. When the Bishop (who'd been about to order one) refused, Mr. Quirke had apparently taken him for a teetotaler with a past. He said he'd had a little problem until Father Early got hold of him.

Father Early was discussing the youth eating with Mr. Quirke. "Glenn's been in a little trouble at home —and at school. Three schools, I believe. Good family. I have his father's permission to leave him with the Christian Brothers in Ireland, if they'll have him."



When Glenn got up from the table, the Bishop decided he didn't like the look of him. Glenn was short-haired, long-legged, a Doberman pinscher of a boy, He loped out of the diner, followed by Mr. Quirke.

Two problems, thought the Bishop, getting ready to happen—and doubtless there were more of them in the group. Miss Culhane, in her fashion, could make trouble.

"There's something I'd like to discuss with you, Bishop."

The Bishop stiffened. Now it was coming, he feared, the all-out attempt to recruit him.

Father Early was looking across the table, at the empty places there. "You realize they'd been drinking?"

The Bishop refused to comment. *Now what?*

"It wouldn't surprise me if they met on this train."

"Yes, well . . ."

"Bishop, in my opinion the boy is or has been a practicing Catholic."

In the Bishop's opinion, it was none of Father Early's business. He knew what Father Early was getting at, and he didn't like it. Father Early was thinking of taking on more trouble.

"I believe the boy's in danger," Father Early said. "Real danger."

The Bishop opened his mouth to tell Father Early off, but not much came out. "I wouldn't call him a boy." The Bishop felt that Father Early had expected something of the sort from him, nothing, and no support. Father Early had definitely gone into one of his silences. The Bishop, fussing with his cuffs, suddenly reached, but Father Early beat him to the checks.

Father Early complimented the waiter on the service and food, rewarding him with golden words.

The Bishop was going to leave a tip, to be on the safe side, but apparently the waiter was as good as his word. They left the diner in the blaze of his hospitality.

The Bishop had expected to be asked where in New York he'd be saying Mass in the morning, but when they arrived at their doors, Father Early smiled and put out his hand. It certainly looked like goodbye.

They shook hands.

And then, suddenly, Father Early was on his knees, his head bowed and waiting for the Bishop's blessing.

HIS MIND was full of the day and he was afraid he was in for one of those nights he'd had on trains before. He kept looking at his watch in the dark, listening for sounds of activity next door, and finally he admitted to himself that he was waiting for Father Early to come in. So he gave Father Early until midnight . . . and then he got dressed and went out to look for him.

Up ahead he saw Glenn step into the corridor from an end room and go around the corner. The Bishop

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prepared to say hello. But when he was about to pass, the atmosphere filled up with cigarette smoke. The Bishop hurried through it, unrecognized, he hoped, considering the lateness of the hour and the significance of another visit to the club car, as it might appear to Glenn who could have observed him there earlier in the evening.

The club car was empty except for a man with a magazine in the middle of the car, the waiter serving him a drink, and the young man and Father Early at the tail end of the train, seated on a sofa facing upon the tracks. The Bishop advanced with difficulty to the rear. The train was traveling too fast.

Father Early glanced around. He moved over on the sofa to make room for the Bishop, and had the young man move. The Bishop sat down beside the young man who was now in the middle.

"One I went to—we're talking about fairs, Bishop—had an educated donkey, as the fellow called it. This donkey could tell one color from another—knew them all by name. The fellow had these paddles, you've seen them, painted different colors. Red, green, blue, brown, black, orange, yellow, white—oh, all colors . . ."

The Bishop, from the tone of this, sensed that nothing had been resolved and that Father Early's objective was to keep the young man up all night with him. It was a siege.

"The fellow would say, 'Now, Trixie'—I remember the little donkey's name. You might've seen her at some time."

The young man shook his head.

" 'Now, Trixie,' the fellow would say, 'bring me the yellow paddle,' and that's what she'd do. She'd go to the rack, where all the paddles were hanging, pick out the yellow one, and carry it to the fellow. Did it with her teeth, of course. Then the fellow would say, 'Trixie, bring me the green paddle.' "

"And she brought the green one," said the young man patiently.

"That's right. The fellow would say, 'Now, Trixie, bring me the paddles that are the colors of the flag.' " Father Early addressed the Bishop: "Red, white, and blue."

"Yes," said the Bishop. What an intricate instrument for good a simple man could be! Perhaps Father Early was only a fool, a ward of heaven, not subject to the usual penalties for meddling. No, it was zeal, and people, however far gone, still expected it from a man of God. But, even so, Father Early ought to be more careful, humbler before the mystery of iniquity. And still . . .

"My, that was a nice little animal, that Trixie." Father Early paused, giving his attention to the signal lights blinking down the tracks, and continued. "Red, green, all colors. Most fairs have little to recommend them. Some fairs, however, are worthwhile." Father Early stood up. "I'll be right back," he said, and went to the lavatory.

The Bishop was about to say something—to keep the ball rolling—when the young man got up and left, without a word.

The Bishop sat where he was until he heard the lavatory door open and shut. Then he got up to meet Father Early. Father Early looked beyond the Bishop, toward the place where the young man had been, and then at the Bishop. He didn't appear to blame the Bishop at all. Nothing was said.

They walked in the direction from which Father Early had just come. The Bishop thought they were calling it a day, but Father Early was onto something else, trying the waiter on baseball.

"Good night, Father."

"Oh?" said Father Early, as if he'd expected the Bishop to stick around for it.

"Good night, Father." The Bishop had a feeling that baseball wouldn't last, that the sermon on tipping was due again.

"Good night, Bishop."

The Bishop moved off comically, as the train made up for lost time. Entering his pullman car, he saw the young man, who must have been kept waiting, disappear into the room Glenn had come out of earlier.

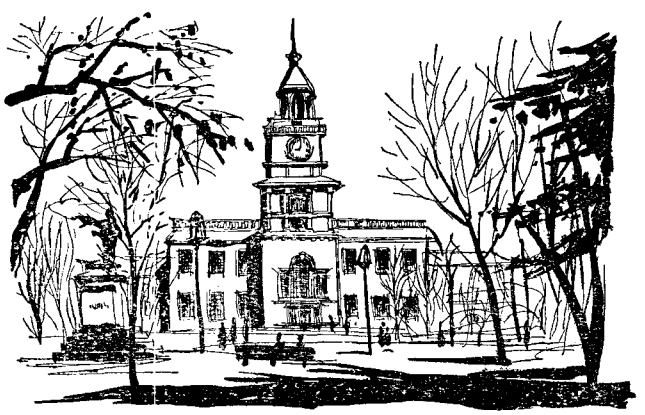
The Bishop slept well that night, after all, but not before he thought of Father Early still out there, on his feet and trying, which was what counted in the sight of God, not success. *Thinkest thou that I cannot ask my father, and he will give me presently more than twelve legions of angels?*

"Would you like me to run through these names with you, Bishop, or do you want to familiarize yourself with the people as we go along."

"I'd prefer that, I think. And I wish you'd keep the list, Miss Culhane."

"I don't think Father Early would want you to be without it, Bishop."

"No? Very well, I'll keep it then."



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Impersonal Ironist of the Single Vision

TEN NORTH FREDERICK. By John O'Hara. Random House. $3.95.

By JOHN F. SULLIVAN

ONE of the reflections to which a reading of John O'Hara's new novel, *Ten North Frederick,* gives rise is that we are hypocritical to ban the import of books like *Lady Chatterly's Lover* or the works of Henry Miller, if this native product is entitled to an unrestricted circulation. For it must be said at the outset that this is a rough book, full of four-letter words and clinically observed sex, and there is apt to be a furore about it which may have little to do with whatever artistic values are to be found in it.

That there are artistic values I think is undeniable. O'Hara demonstrates for us again his observant eye, his remarkable ear, his dramatist's sense of scene. There are many good pages in this novel, many scenes that would make excellent short stories if they stood by themselves. But they do not come together successfully into an artistic whole.

The scene of the new novel is again Gibbsville, Pa., and many of the characters and details which appeared in *Appointment in Samarra* and *A Rage to Live* are worked in again. Ten North Frederick is the address of Joseph B. Chapin, one of richest, handsomest, most respected leading citizens of the town. The story begins with his impressive funeral and, after leisurely, three-dimensional introductions to the principal mourners, we are led back to his parents and then forward again to his death.

When I began reading about the funeral of Joe Chapin, I was reminded of an O'Hara story which appeared, I think, in the *Pipe Night* volume. It was nothing so elaborate as this, of course, for the whole story consisted of the eulogy of a dead man, ironically revealing an emptiness of soul. As I continued to read, the recollection of the story faded, because the novel is not a mere expansion of the story, yet the dim recall of the story had served to throw light for me upon what I think is O'Hara's primary defect as a writer.

To the extent that O'Hara succeeds, as he does so unquestionably in *Appointment* and in many short stories, he is an ironist. But irony demands a double vision, which, when it concerns the manners of men, consists in a recognition of the discrepancy between what is and what ought to be. In the two major Gibbsville sagas since *Appointment* —as perhaps also to a lesser degree in *Butterfield 8* and in *Hope of Heaven*—O'Hara tries to shut one eye, as it were, to see his material without perspective.

Parenthetically here, I think it may be noted too that O'Hara's feelings about Gibbsville do slip in on occasion, and that part of the trouble is that they are ambiguous. He surely has some ironic awareness of the falsity behind the facade of life at Ten North Frederick, but he cannot help admiring it. Thus, he writes:

> They lived within their income, they bought only the best and they bought to last. . . . In their home was a kind of restfulness; all that was needed was there, and nothing would be changed and no additions made unless the change or addition was required for permanent improvement. . . . The Benjamin Chapins made no compromise with taste as they felt it or quality as they understood it.

But such a flaw in the ironic vision is a minor defect compared to the attempt to abandon it completely. For O'Hara seems to be well aware of what he is doing and to want to do it. On the last page of *Ten North Frederick,* he says,

> There is here, in the biography of Joe Chapin, nothing that could not have been seen or heard by the people whose lives were touched by Joe Chapin's life. Whatever he thought, whatever he felt has always been expressed to or through someone else, and the reader can judge for himself the truth of what the man told or did not tell.

This seems to be more than a naive claim to an impersonal point of view. It may be the ideal of the naturalistic method to remove the author from his story, but if it is, it is an ideal which negates the whole meaning of art and artist. The reader may very properly be asked to contribute much, but he cannot contribute all.

To Do with Evil

THE RED UMBRELLAS. By Kelvin Lindemann. Appleton - Century - Crofts. $3.50.

By R. T. HORCHLER

ALTHOUGH it appears at first to be merely exotic and irrelevant *belles lettres, The Red Umbrellas* is a wise, beautiful and extraordinary novel. It is a "frame-story" of narratives within a narrative, reminiscent of the *Decameron*: as cholera ravages the Copenhagen of a hundred years ago, certain members of the *haut monde* gather at an elegant dinner party and amuse themselves between courses by telling quaint and marvelous tales. In contrast to the romantic naiveté of most of the stories, the tone is sophisticated and ironic and the language mannered and mellifluous.

All this seems—at first—trivial and artificial. There is no conventional plot, of course, and there is little surface relation between the fascinating but extravagantly unreal fables. Gradually, however, we come to perceive the unity in the symbolic implications, the thematic correspondences beneath the heterogeneity of character, situation and mood. And that the questions dealt with in *The Red Umbrellas* grow out of such divergent human conditions is one of the reasons for its

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ultimate power. For these are transcendent questions, pressing upon men in every mode of life, relating to the essential and changeless in the human situation.

The stories told at the dinner party are announced as bearing upon the theme of "fear with particular regard to religious feeling." They may all be interpreted as having some subtle connection with this idea, but the relation is by no means obvious. More simply, the tales have to do with evil—recognizing it and coping with it in one way or another. Many of the tales are quite horrible and some point only to a bleak despair; but the individual stories reflect only the separate stages of a delicately organized, inevitably progressing journey towards hope.

This progression of idea in the sequence of the stories is matched by a parallel development on the other level of the novel, that of the story-tellers. Here the Marchioness Hermione Schnell, hostess and foremost member of the group, is the chief character. A kind of portrait of her mind is established in the stories she tells, in her comments on them and the ones told by her companions, and in her reactions to the events of the story-telling evening. A woman who had walked through the ruins of her life "like Scipio through Carthage," she rediscovers love in this single, wonderful evening of vicarious and actual experience. At the end, she is able to say, "I'll show you that a handful of dust can sustain God's wisdom and glory."

The author of *The Red Umbrellas* enjoys an extensive and honored reputation in Scandinavia, and this latest work—translated with remarkable success by Mr. Lindemann himself—should win him similar honor, although probably not a great popularity, in this country. Elegant, elaborate and highly formal, unconcerned with "modern-life," divorced from any cultural context, his book has not the kind of realism we are used to. In its interest, method and manner, it stands—in triumph—outside the conventions of fiction today.

Finding the Past

THE SECRET OF THE HITTITES. By C. W. Ceram. Knopf. $5.

By ANTHONY BAILEY

BOOKS by archeologists increase in proportion to our resources and our desire to learn about the past. Their apparatus is in many ways similar to that of the detective story; in tension and in their power to excite the idle curiosity they rival the best thriller. The criminal is time, the corpses are nations and cities, the work of nations. C. W. Ceram, the author of *Gods, Graves and Scholars,* who has now written this intriguing tale of the discovery of the Hittite empire, is a leading contemporary "private eye."

Where exactly the Hittites came from no one is yet sure. Around 1900 B.C. bands of Indo-Europeans came down upon Anatolia from the northwest or the northeast, created city-states, and eventually a feudal kingship. After this an empire grew which in size and power

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JOURNEY INTO A FOG

by Margareta Berger-Hamerschlag

This book doesn't sound alarming. It is only the experiences of an art teacher working in a Youth Club in a poor district of London. Yet anyone who can read it without pity and horror must be very hard boiled indeed. The adolescents who wander into the art class are frightening because they are without hope or purpose, expecting nothing of this life, believing in no other. It is a wonderful study of the atmosphere in which juvenile crime develops—in any country. And to deal intelligently with "delinquency", we must understand it. The illustrations, one of which is reproduced above, are by the author. $3.50

IN SOFT GARMENTS

by Msgr. Ronald Knox

In *The Hidden Stream*, a collection of his lectures to Catholic students at Oxford, Msgr. Knox mentioned this, an earlier book of the same kind, which had not been published in America. We have been bombarded with requests for it, and have brought out this edition in self defense. $3.00

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equaled the two other great empires of the near-eastern world, Egypt and Syria, for nearly a thousand years. Wars were fought and kings assassinated. An elective kingship became an hereditary monarchy. Laws were made which, in contrast to the general oriental principle of an eye for an eye, were notable for particularly humane penalties. In political craft and military astuteness the greatest of the Hittite kings, Suppiluliumas I (1375-35 B.C.), lacked few talents modern leaders have displayed.

We know this, and much more, in A.D. 1956. In 1834 the very existence of an empire on this scale, in that area, anywhere in the past, was completely unheard of. During July of that year a Frenchman looking for ruins of another sort stumbled on the debris of a vast city near the small inhabited village of Borghazköy, in central Turkey. He had found what turned out to be Hattusas, the one-time capital of the Hittites, a metropolis that at the height of its power was as large as Athens in its prime. Until then the Hittites had been but one of the tribes of the Bible, who "dwell in the mountains" to the north of Judah. But it was some time, after a century of painful effort, before the archeologist, the philologist, the "grave-digger," could begin to determine properly their place in history.

A clue to the immensity of that work is afforded by the bibliography at the end of Mr. Ceram's book. For page after page the titles, names, and references go on. Anglo-Saxon, French, German, Turkish: two, side by side, are J. A. Wilson's "The Texts of the Battle of Quadesh," from the *American Journal of Semitic Languages* 1927, and L. Wohler's "Die altrömische und die hethitische evocatio," from the *Archiv fur Religionswissenschaft*, 1928; somehow these names evoke the dust, the sand and the hurricane-lamp light, the drudgery and the romance of this most exacting history. And it is on these articles and on the spade-work of such men that Mr. Ceram's readable and exciting book is based.

Yet, as the author confesses, one cannot yet pretend to a Rankean

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by Oliver Barres

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thoroughness, and the archeologist eschews the interpretative method of a Gibbon or Spengler. "Our picture of the time is still too sketchy, our conception too dim. The archeologists have found plenty of material, but the gaps are still enormous. With what the historian now has at his disposal he can at best piece together a history of the Hittite kings and their wars."

Even this was difficult. An entirely unknown language had to be deciphered, the age of stones measured, all the natural obstacles placed in the way of the historian by time and nature overcome by human skill and invention. Already something more than "kings and wars" is known of the Hittites: their culture and their technological achievements are thrown up, almost as it were by the way. It is a welcome thing to know that, despite the efforts of ancient Egyptian scribes, history can stay rewritten for only so long—the truth, or more of it, is uncovered. Mr. Ceram's book will draw enthusiasm from the reader, right down to its last exclamation mark.

Limited Craft

BOON ISLAND. By Kenneth Roberts. Doubleday. $3.75.

By THOMAS E. CURLEY

D. H. LAWRENCE tells a story of being asleep under the bushes hoping a snake would not crawl down his neck when Walt Whitman drove by "in his great fierce poetic machine." Looking up, Lawrence thinks to himself: "What a funny world that fellow sees!" After reading *Boon Island* I feel the same way about Kenneth Roberts.

As the account of a shipwreck and the ingenious endurance of the survivors, the book is very nearly flawless. Roberts is a finished craftsman; he knows what he wants to do and he does it capably. Those who have never picked oakum with frozen fingers, who have no hope of ever climbing a ratline, who have not known the Yankee generosity of Maine—well, such unfortunates have much to learn from *Boon Island*. The twenty-four days of "frigid hell," to which fourteen men were exposed and which ten of them survived, is recreated meticulously. There is no suspense, no development of character, no true sense of adventure; only dull, cold pain.

That, at least, is an achievement, but a lonely one. For some reason, the creator of Richard Rogers has chosen to write a book without characters. One is tempted to describe it as an historical allegory. Of the ten survivors, three are good, three bad, three weak and one, an epileptic, tips the balance slightly toward the good. Everyman would have been appropriate in this book, but Mr. Roberts, a moral realist of the Yankee variety, will have no truck with him. The result is exasperating, and the exasperation is compounded by the potentialities for fame one sees in the villain, first mate Langman. Had the narrator been less righteous, or more perceptive, Langman, "Malice Personified" we are told, might have taken his place beside William Faulkner's Henry Armstid as a type of ineffectual stubbornness. Any man who,

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despite hunger and frost-bite, keeps his own calendar and accuses his mates of blasphemy when they celebrate Christmas a day late (according to his reckoning) is worth a longer look. One wants to take the narrator by the scruff of the neck and put him out of the book so that Langman can speak for himself.

This "implacable detestation of false men and evil measures," this moral impatience which he attributes to America, severely cripples Mr. Roberts' imagination. No doubt his intolerance is well grounded in reason and experience, and it may be, as Richard Wilbur puts it, that "In a time of continual dry abdications/And of damp complicities" Mr. Roberts' narrow rectitude is the proper tonic. I doubt it, though.

"God save me," Lawrence wrote. "I feel like creeping down a rabbit hole, to get away from all these automobiles rushing down the One Identity track to the goal of Allness." Before I finished *Boon Island* I wanted to follow Lawrence down that hole, to get away from the great American eagerness to help, rightheadedness and that "implacable detestation of false men."

Of Common Sense

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. By Carl Van Doren. 250th Anniversary Edition. Viking. $4.95.

By JOHN COURNOS

IT is fitting that the 250th anniversary of Benjamin Franklin's birth should be signalized by a popular reissue of Carl Van Doren's wholly admirable and very readable biography. A rereading of it is a salutary exercise, not only because it is profitable and pleasurable to meet and remeet a great man and a great American, an old friend so to speak, but also because in our own time, a time of troubles, we have need of precisely such a man, one who always kept his wits about him and handled each situation with a realism that brought results.

This, indeed, was his virtue and limitation, as Mr. Van Doren's biography makes abundantly clear. Unlike John Adams, who was a rigid uncompromiser, he knew when to seize an advantage and when to give way; this was evident when the two men were negotiating treaties with England and France. Here was a delicate situation calling for the greatest finesse, with the ever present danger of offending both nations. Adams thought Franklin was too susceptible to French influence to effect a proper deal for America, but it was Franklin who, with a diplomatic skill beyond that possessed by the forthright Bostonian, paved the way for a successful conclusion to the negotiations. It is scarcely possible that Adams could have said that honesty was the best policy. Honesty to him was something for its own sake, and he would have no truck with policy.

If Franklin, however, was not above practising expediency, it was never, with him, harmful in inten-

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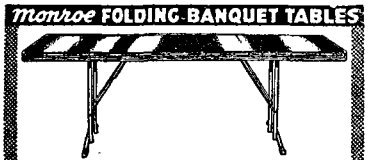

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"This is the first thing which should be required of a Catholic periodical: that, basically, it should not suggest to the non-Catholic, or even to the non-believing reader, that it is only written for the chosen, so to speak, for the saved, but also for all the others who do not yet live in the truth, but who still search for it. It is not quite easy to explain this difference to those who regard Catholicism as party politics, and who therefore from the beginning take a particularist and a polemical attitude. . . .

"Of course, we do not recommend the taking of a wishy-washy position, nor the befuddling of the content of the Faith; on the contrary, we recommend its accentuation, but an accentuation of the whole, to which also belongs the living knowledge that Christ died for all men, and that, therefore, if we love Christ, we must love also those men who, deliberately or ignorantly, are outside the Church.

"And that means, at the same time, that a Catholic periodical must never have a complacent tone, nor a condescending or pharisaical undertone, towards those who are not in possession of the truth—the truth that we ourselves have often merely inherited, instead of having ourselves acquired in order to possess it. For a Catholic periodical, too, has to search for that truth, which is its prerequisite."

from an article in The Commonweal by
Franz Josef Schoeningh, Editor of "Hochland"

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tion or effect. He was a practical man, a pragmatist, the first of his kind among our great men, and in this sense he was the first American. It was his genius to possess that most English of virtues, common sense, in the highest possible degree. And by common sense we mean that sense which provides a proper coordination of the so-called five senses. He was an all-round, well-informed man, for whom all aspects of human existence held an interest. He was at home wherever he was; the French adored him, especially the French women. When he left for America, the people of France gave him an affectionate parting such as no one ever received before or since. He was intensely shrewd, which did not hinder him from being a true sage. He preached virtue, but did not always practice it. In religion he was a Deist, a man tolerant to all religions; he was also an authentic forerunner of the American democracy of today.

Heroine Abroad

AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY. By Alden Hatch. Henry Holt. $3.75.

By JOSEPH M. DUFFY, JR.

THE AMERICAN heroine abroad is a persistently suggestive figure in our national literature. Hawthorne's Hilda in *The Marble Faun* enriched her understanding of life through a stay in Italy. James's Milly in *The Wings of the Dove* achieved tragic fulfillment in Europe as the splendid, blighted "heiress of all the ages." And more recently Anita Loos's Lorelei Lee in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* made her journey to Paris in quest for, not spiritual fulfillment, but more diamonds. Now, in *Ambassador Extraordinary,* we encounter another such heroine, this time taken from life, not art. An actress at ten, the wife of a millionaire twice her age at twenty, a playwright and the wife of a great publicist at thirty, a member of Congress at forty, and at last Ambassador to Italy at fifty, Mrs. Clare Boothe Luce's career has been more extravagant than that

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of any of her fictional predecessors.

With a feeling for the remarkable aspects of his subject Alden Hatch opens his book as though he were announcing a work of epic dimension: "In the whole history of diplomacy since the first Cro-Magnon chieftain sent his fastest talker to negotiate with the foreigners in the caves across the valley—for fifty thousand years or more—no woman has held so important a diplomatic post as Clare Boothe Luce, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Italy." This is a very high tone, of course, and Mr. Hatch does not stay up there long; in fact he does not return to it until the conclusion which is an apt quotation from Solomon on the "valiant woman."

Mr. Hatch is more at home on the conversational level where his mettle as a chronicler of life and character gleams true: "She lived in a beautiful triplex overlooking the East River in the apartment house that Alexander Woollcott had named 'Wits End' because it was at the end of the street and so many wits lived there." Occasionally he ascends to lyric transport over people as well as furniture: "Not the least amazing thing in their extraordinary careers is that two such sophisticated, egocentric, and *spoiled* people as Clare Brokaw and Harry Luce fell so unpremeditately, so romantically, so *vernally* in love." At least once he assumes the role of arbiter of classic drama when he estimates the status of *The Women*: "Now that the dust storm kicked up by controversy has settled sufficiently to allow a cool, clear look, the play is accepted as a classic of the theater." And in several places he shows a nice indifference to scholarly accuracy as when he refers to "Radcliff" College, to the "Sherry-Netherlands" Hotel, to "Leland-Stanford" University, and to "the Christian" as heroine of *Candida*.

Whatever the judgment on her achievement may be, Mrs. Luce's career is so interesting that it deserves to be described seriously—as life or art. Mr. Hatch does not do so. His style is so bad that by comparison a column by Walter Winchell seems as urbane as a page from Balzac. *Ambassador Extraordinary* is simply the worst book this reviewer has read written in our time apparently for a respectable and literate audience.

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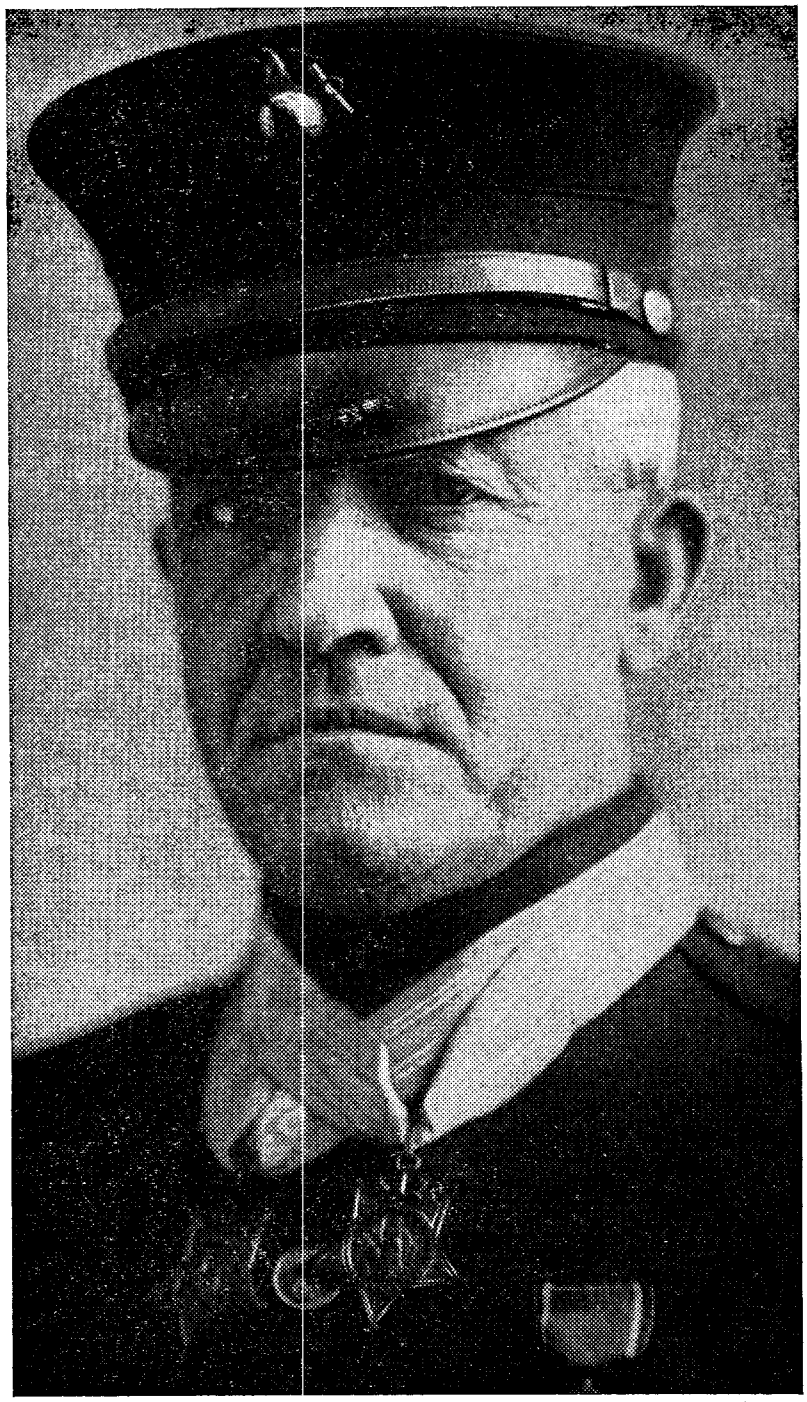

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